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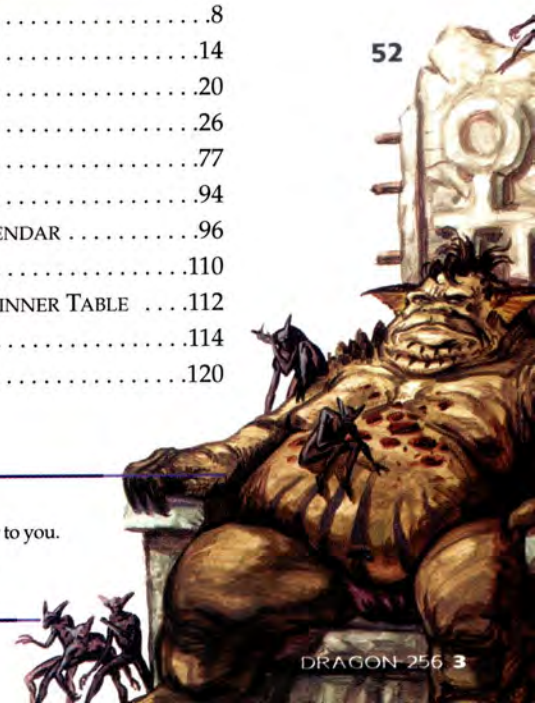

On the Cover

Staff artist rk post exposes three "illustrious" rogues whose names will surely be familiar to you. From left to right, they are TSR artists Fred Fields, Todd Lockwood, and Brom. Mr. Post has his own revealing moment in "ProFiles", page 120.

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I Have Issues

Honestly, I never meant for it to happen. I was around when it happened to Roger Moore. The staff was quite in awe, but Roger seemed rather embarrassed. It almost happened to Kim Mohan, but that was before my time.

My story begins innocently enough. In 1988, I left behind the concrete canyons of New York City in search of a quiet life in the Heartland. I had been enjoying my small-town existence for almost two years when the fateful phone call came. On the other end of the line was Carol Hubbard, head of personnel at TSR®, Inc. She and Roger had decided that I should take over art direction for the TSR publications (there were four at that time).

I was beginning to feel rumblings of boredom with my quiet life, and the thought of meeting new people and taking on new responsibilities struck a chord. So, I headed down to Lake Geneva to see what the buzz was all about (never once thinking that years later I'd be here telling this tale), and met an incredible group of people. "Well," I thought, "this is certainly different. I'll do it for a year or two, until it becomes a routine, and then move on."

It never became a routine.

Now, the awkward thing that happened to Roger Moore a few years ago, and almost happened to Kim Mohan, is happening to me: This is my one hundredth issue on the staff of *DRAGON® Magazine*.

During the past nine years, gaming has undergone massive change, but there are certainly people reading this who remember my first issues. Just as certainly, some people reading this have only read the past few. That's a great thing about this hobby and this magazine—the ability to bring together people of different experience, different styles, and different points of view. To create a unified effort and achieve a goal is at the heart of any adventure. There's a satisfaction that keeps bringing you back, whether it's a dungeon crawl or a deadline.

So here I sit in front of a computer that confounds me on a daily basis yet does things that were impossible only a few years ago. Here I sit, two thousand miles from Wisconsin. For the most part, that incredible group of people from Lake Geneva is here, in Renton. We've been on an amazing journey over the years. We've added new, equally incredible people to our band of adventurers. I doubt I would have come this far without their friendship and support.

Without a doubt, the most important element in this saga is you. Thanks for reading one—or all—of the past one hundred issues. Thanks for writing and letting us know what you think. Thanks for keeping the adventure alive.

DRAGON®

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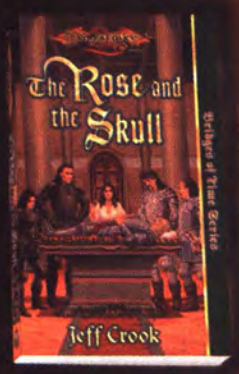

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Pure Imagination

I have been a medieval fantasy lover for as long as I remember. I collect board games and artwork on the subject, and I am a rookie of a couple years roleplaying. Out of curiosity, I picked up the October and November issues of *DRAGON® Magazine*. Reading these two issues kindled a new fire for roleplaying. It was purely a seed for the imagination. At every page turn, a new idea for a game came to mind, a new scenario popped up, and I have been longing to roleplay more than ever before.

My friends and I played one last session of the FIFTH AGE® game (which I'd like to see more of in your magazine) before we went off to college for the year.

The imagination is the most important thing in all the world...

It was our most memorable game not because it was the last one we've played in a while, but because we were all in a different world for a day. We were all different people. Nothing can be more fun than to watch your quiet, reserved friend play a grumpy dwarf arguing with a jumpy kender. But to see these two completely different personalities (*played* by two completely different personalities) work their way out of sticky situations by relying on each other's off-the-wall methods was a treat.

The imagination is the most important thing in all the world to me. Without it, inventions would never be made, novels never written. In *DRAGON Magazine*, new ideas pop up all the time. I don't care so much for the rules and technical jargon, though I realize that rules are always needed as a common ground. Instead, I always strive for a new place to be, a new adventure to unfold, and new conflicts to be resolved.

Until then, I want to thank *DRAGON Magazine* for the constant imaginative fuel and for reinforcing my love of roleplaying.

Lee Van Sickle
Evergreen Park, IL

It's great to hear that even as we concentrate on useful game material, the magazine still fires the imaginations of those who aren't (yet) die-hard roleplayers. If you, like Lee, read DRAGON Magazine *more for ideas than for rules content, send us a letter telling us which sections are your favorites.*

Style & Substance

Greetings! I've been a subscriber since issue #138, and I know there are plenty of others out there who have been around longer (the "Great Old Ones," if you'll pardon the Lovecraftian expression), but I think I have been here long enough to say "great job!" and to have you know that this compliment comes from someone who's been through both the good and the bad.

From what I have seen over the years and through the issues, I must say that I am totally impressed with the new format and the direction in which you have taken the magazine. It is refreshing and fun.

I have seen all of the changes that *DRAGON Magazine* has undergone through the years I've been around, and I must say not all have been good. I was actually thinking of canceling my subscription, but you have given me hope.

The new, consistent layout is a godsend! For a few issues, the format was changing faster than Spinal Tap's drummer. Now, with the new layout, I can easily locate my favorite articles by the headers and titles. Many thanks!

Also, I must tip my hat to you all on the great writing. The originality of the articles has stepped up. (I don't remember any jack-o-lantern articles before. Bravo!) The overall usefulness of each issue has improved exponentially as a result. The short bios at the end of each article are interesting; it's fun to know a bit about the author—another great idea!

As far as articles on games other than the AD&D® game, why not? This magazine is a great way to introduce new games and material. There are plenty of STAR FRONTIERS® and MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ (along with a few GAMMA WORLD® and TOP SECRET™) articles in the last hundred or so issues, and I think it doesn't detract from the usefulness of the magazine in the least.

As Wizards of the Coast is a large gaming company expanding to suit the needs and wants of its fans (and future gamers), I fully expect you to run articles that generate interest in your new lines of product. Granted, I am not a sci-fi gamer, nor am I big into superhero games, but I do play a lot of games other than just the ones put out by TSR, and articles about other games will not stop me from reading your magazine as long as the overall quality is good. I have also found that any article, if read by a creative individual (as all gamers like to say we are), can easily be adapted for any game system.

I hardly think that we would ever see an issue of *DRAGON Magazine* without any reference to the AD&D game. An even balance is all that anyone has a right to ask for.

Well, without taking up any more of your time, I would like to say once again: Good job, and thank you for all the years of enjoyment that I have had. I hope for many more to come!

Brett J. Bloczynski
Madison, WI

While we don't want to belabor the point, we're striving for the perfect mix all the time. Especially throughout 1999, we've planned a schedule that keeps AD&D game articles prominent while still supporting other TSR games, especially the increasingly popular ALTERNITY® *game and the new* MARVEL SUPER HEROES *game. At the same time, we're still reading all the mail and responding to your letters by looking for the articles you most want to read. Speaking of such letters …*

Nevermind the Movie!

I would like to respond to Steven Poer's letter in *DRAGON Magazine* issue #253. There *should* be a DRAGONLANCE® movie! But that is beside the point. I'd like to see more DRAGONLANCE articles in *DRAGON Magazine*! Issue #253 was great. "The Random Magical Weapon Generator" was awesome, and it gave me many magical items to use in my campaign. I always love Ed Greenwood's "Wyrms of the North" since it gives me great dragons to transplant into my own campaign. I also enjoy the various other articles sprinkled through every issue. However, I have little use for GREYHAWK® and FORGOTTEN REALMS® articles because they are difficult to transplant into a Krynnish campaign.

While I play DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE, even an article with both SAGA® and AD&D stats printed once every two or three months would appease me. There was a short run of DRAGONLANCE articles a few months ago, but they have disappeared. It is my belief that GREYHAWK and ALTERNITY articles have taken their place.

ALTERNITY is a great game, but an article or two every issue, ye gods! And the amount of GREYHAWK and FORGOTTEN REALMS material in every issue is staggering! I would love to see more DRAGONLANCE, and even some more RAVENLOFT® and DARK SUN® material! When I read the preview for the 1998 *DRAGON Magazine Annual*, I didn't see any mention of a DRAGONLANCE article! Say it isn't so!

So please, to appease us DRAGONLANCE fans, please print more Krynnish articles concerning any age! Even I have sent in an article submission, so you have no more excuses. I just want my new subscription to be worthwhile.

Thanks for listening!

Eric Jwo
San Jose, CA

Sometimes the perfect mix is a juggling act, but we haven't forgotten the DRAGONLANCE and DARK SUN settings. On the other hand, we receive more requests for articles on the FORGOTTEN REALMS and GREYHAWK settings—not to mention the ALTERNITY game. We'll keep trying to make everyone happy, and you'll definitely see some DRAGONLANCE articles in 1999, starting this issue.

252 in Review

I decided to drop a line about *DRAGON Magazine* issue #252. I enjoyed the cover by Robh Ruppel; it fit the mood of the magazine. I also enjoyed several of the articles, with the exception of the "Home, Sweet Headquarters" for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Adventure Game. It seemed out of place in an issue on horror campaigning.

My favorite (and the most useful) article is "Grim Callings" by Steve Berman. It adds flavor and depth to those characters of players who wish to hunt the undead.

The two other articles I found to be interesting were "The Ecology of the Ghoul" by Wolfgang Baur and the "Legacy of Decay" by Ted Zuvich; both are useful additions to any campaign.

Mathew Seibel
Tigard, OR

A note on issue themes: We strive for three to six theme-related articles in an issue, so don't be surprised if we include a non-horror article in a horror-themed issue. That way, even if the theme isn't your favorite, we hope you'll find something you like in every issue.

Thanks for the issue-specific comments, Mathew. That's the most useful kind of feedback.

Points for Participation

Thanks for issue #253. I found every article to be of use to some extent. "The Random Magical Weapon Generator" will come in handy, I am sure, and "Dungeon Mastery" was excellent. I also liked the article concerning the ALTERNITY game and hope you keep them coming, since there is no magazine for it yet.

I would like to say "well done" in regards to the various contests that have been running in *DRAGON Magazine* in the last several issues. I appreciate your

Nodwick
By Aaron Williams
WHO DARES TO INVADE MY HOME WHILE I'M PLOTTING THE SUBJUGATION OF THE MASSES?!
WE DO, COUNT REPUGSIVE! YOUR EVIL IS AT AN END!
HA! MY BROTHER SENDS MEWLING MERCINARIES TO PESTER ME! PREPARE FOR OBLIVION!!
ALL RIGHT; LET'S TAKE HIM!
UH, NOT THAT I DON'T HAVE ANY CONFIDENCE IN YOU GUYS, BUT COULD SOMEONE INITIAL MY TIME SHEET NOW, WHILE EVERYONE STILL HAS WORKING FINGERS?

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finally providing a way for players to get involved in the bigger picture of the gaming world. Although I have not entered any of the contests, I look forward to seeing what the new contest is with each issue. One thing I have been wondering is why *Dragon Magazine* hasn't run a contest on game ideas involving products. I know it is TSR's policy to not accept unsolicited ideas, but why not have a contest or two to see what gamers have come up with. How else would we find out about someone's idea of creating training films on becoming a great DM or writing a book recounting the first adventures of famous icons in gaming? How about a documentary on roleplaying? Then there is the idea of an electronic format of the Core Rules for the Franklin Electronic Book series.

These ideas may sound ridiculous or far-fetched, but they are intriguing and hold some promise. Who knows what ideas are sitting out there just waiting for a chance to be revealed?

Joseph Provenzano
Melcher, IA

Running a "Product Idea" contest never occurred to us, since we figure that this very letter column serves the purpose already, as you've so ably demonstrated, Joseph.

What do the rest of you think of Joseph's ideas? How about sharing some of yours?

More Little Heroes

The "Little Heroes" editorial in issue #253 has led me to write this letter about our group and our use of miniatures in our AD&D campaigns. Our club, the Widow's Peak Gaming Coterie, has its origins way back in the '70s, when roleplaying first began. My close friend Joe Zellmer and I were longtime wargamers before the advent of the AD&D game. We were swept up in the initial wave of roleplaying popularity and have never looked back.

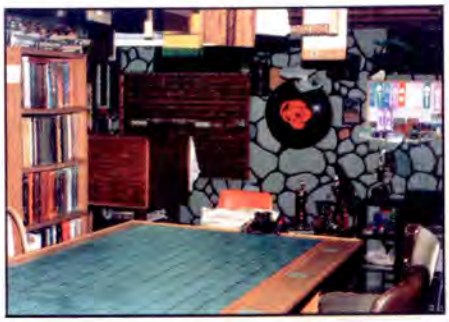
In those early days, there were very few roleplaying miniatures available; even dice were extremely rare! Pennies, d6s, or any small markers were used to represent the characters and the monsters. For d20s and the like, we used numbered chits thrown in a hat.

Thankfully, the miniatures drought was short-lived, and we soon added

every kind of miniature we could lay our hands on. With our origins in wargaming, it was a natural extension to add maps, diagrams, and room layouts to set up a visually pleasing game as well as to facilitate combat and avoid problems due to misunderstandings about where characters were in relation to the others.

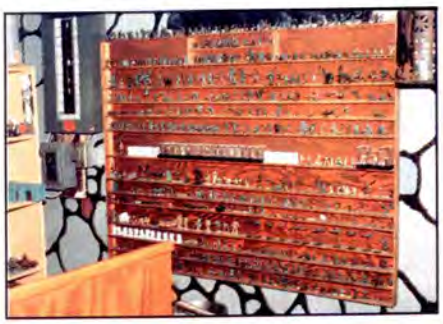
Naturally, as time went on, our use of miniatures and the necessary accessories expanded. After my marriage and subsequent purchase of a house, we were able to take our miniatures experience to a new level. I immediately began to design a gaming table, one that would meet the needs of the DM as well as make the players' experience a memorable one. That first table had a hex grid in the center, and the DM had variable wooden dungeon tiles that allowed him to recreate just about any layout. The outer edge of the table had room for the players' dice, pop, and snacks. As the years went by, I added new miniatures, new tiles, trees, small hills, and just about anything you could think of that would add something to the gaming experience. The walls of my basement were painted to look like a dungeon. Swords, helmets, and lanterns were hung on the walls, as well as speakers for a stereo system to lend a bit more mood and atmosphere. Every Saturday, one could find our group in the "dungeon," moving miniatures around as we battled everything from dragons to beholders. The first table for miniatures had served us well for over ten years, but I wanted to build a new one incorporating everything we had learned in over twenty years of roleplaying, as well as putting my carpentry skills to the test. The design took a little over three months to work out in my head before I was ready to begin. The final product is the ultimate in gaming tables. Like its predecessor, it has an area around the edge for the players' convenience, complete with built-in coasters for drinks. However, the new table differs from the original in many ways. It is a foot longer (4' x 8') and has dungeon tiles built right into the center. This allows the use of walls to delineate the various rooms of any building, dungeon, or cave that the players care to explore. The table is also heavier and sturdier. Ten years of gaming had taken its toll on the old one. I did not throw the old table away. The top was mounted on the wall of my garage so that I could always remember the hours of fun we all had around it.

I have also continued to develop the DM's corner. It is so named because it is where the miniatures, scenery, and other props are kept for the DM's use. It also has a podium where the DM can lay out his notes, maps, and sundries to keep them from the players' prying eyes. I add new miniatures to our growing menagerie as soon as they hit the shelves and my pocketbook allows. There is nothing quite like revealing a new miniature of some ferocious monster and seeing the look on the players' faces! The use of miniatures has really brought the game to life for the players. While we can enjoy roleplaying entirely "in your head," especially at the GEN CON® Game Fair, it cannot match the use of those little metal figures.



The dungeon and game table continue to evolve. I am currently adding black lights and subdued lighting that will replicate the times when our characters spend a lot of time adventuring at night or perhaps in the Underdark! It is a challenge to give my players constantly new experiences with miniatures. As one final note, the gaming room was featured in the movie *Knight Chills*, a supernatural suspense thriller that should be released some time next year.

Jeff Kennedy
Lansing, MI



Jeff's letter, and Jeff Ibach's letter from issue #255, have made me wistful for my old gaming room back in Virginia—when fantasy roleplaying was only my hobby, not also my job! We could use the Ultimate Gaming Table in the Wizards of the Coast Game Center, but it's not the same as having a game room in your own house.

Keep sending us letters (and photos!) about the way you use miniatures in your game, what your group calls itself, and whether you have something like Jeff's fantastic gaming table!

Alternate Frontiers

Thank you for the article "Alternate Frontiers" in *DRAGON Magazine Annual* #3. I expect to have more than a little fun on the Frontier.

Incidentally, I want to add that I think one reason STAR FRONTIERS failed is that it was painted in such broad strokes. If the ALTERNITY game receives work of the quality put into the AD&D game, it should last a long time.

Tom Chlebus
Sturgis, MI

*Tell us what you think of this issue's "World of the Weren," Tom. We think it adds plenty of depth to one of the most popular aliens of the ALTERNITY game and the STAR*DRIVE™ setting. In the next few issues, we'll present articles with new rules and details for using magic and horror in your SF game, ways to convert AD&D game creatures to ALTERNITY aliens, and of course more on the "core" aliens of the ALTERNITY game. There are plenty of other articles in the works, each designed to expand and detail the entire ALTERNITY game universe.*

A Pretty Good Issue

All in all, *DRAGON Magazine* #254 was a pretty good issue. The articles on giants were not really useful to

me, but the article on pit traps was interesting. As usual, "Forum" is probably my favorite feature, but what happened to "Roleplaying Reviews"? Or "The Role of Books"? There have been so many recent releases from TSR competing for my hard-earned dollar, it would be nice to see some of them reviewed in these pages. This is at least the second issue in a row that has not had any reviews.I can't speak for other readers, but the reviews are one of the things I look forward to in each issue.

"Knights of the Dinner Table" was entertaining as usual, and "TSR Previews" is always useful. One thing I would like to see return would be an expanded section on industry news, and TSR news in particular. Some other suggestions: detailed previews or sneak peeks at upcoming releases, as well as interviews or commentary by the designers of said products. With the recent return of the GREYHAWK setting, it would be nice to see some discussion of the direction the setting will take in '99 and beyond. Since we have a regular FORGOTTEN REALMS department, why not a regular or semi-regular GREYHAWK department, or even a rotating column covering a different campaign setting in each issue?

As for article submissions, I would like to see more in-depth articles on campaign development, creative gamemastering, etc. I don't have a lot of use for more new monsters, spells, etc. I suppose we'll always have those to some extent, but I have plenty of both already. I would also like to see more GREYHAWK articles, as well as articles relating to the DRAGONLANCE setting (preferably with both AD&D and SAGA conversions). A series of "campaign journals" or some such containing original source material for the various campaign settings every once in a while would be nice as well. Since *DRAGON Magazine* is an in-house publication of TSR, it would be nice to see some development of TSR's campaign worlds take place in these pages.

Anyway just some thoughts on the magazine of late. Keep up the good work!

Greg Hill
Grand Rapids, MI

As mentioned in recent issues, Greg, we've dropped all reviews in favor of concentrating on what we do best—and what most of our readers have told us they want most. While you won't see reviews, you'll continue to see "TSR Previews" and expanded coverage of TSR news and upcoming releases. Aside from missing the reviews, you'll likely enjoy this year's schedule of articles.

As for a GREYHAWK department … have you been tapping our phones? While we won't announce anything specific yet, we expect to make lots of GREYHAWK fans happy throughout 1999 both with regular articles and maybe a little something special later in the year. Keep an eye on the "next issue" box in upcoming issues for more news.

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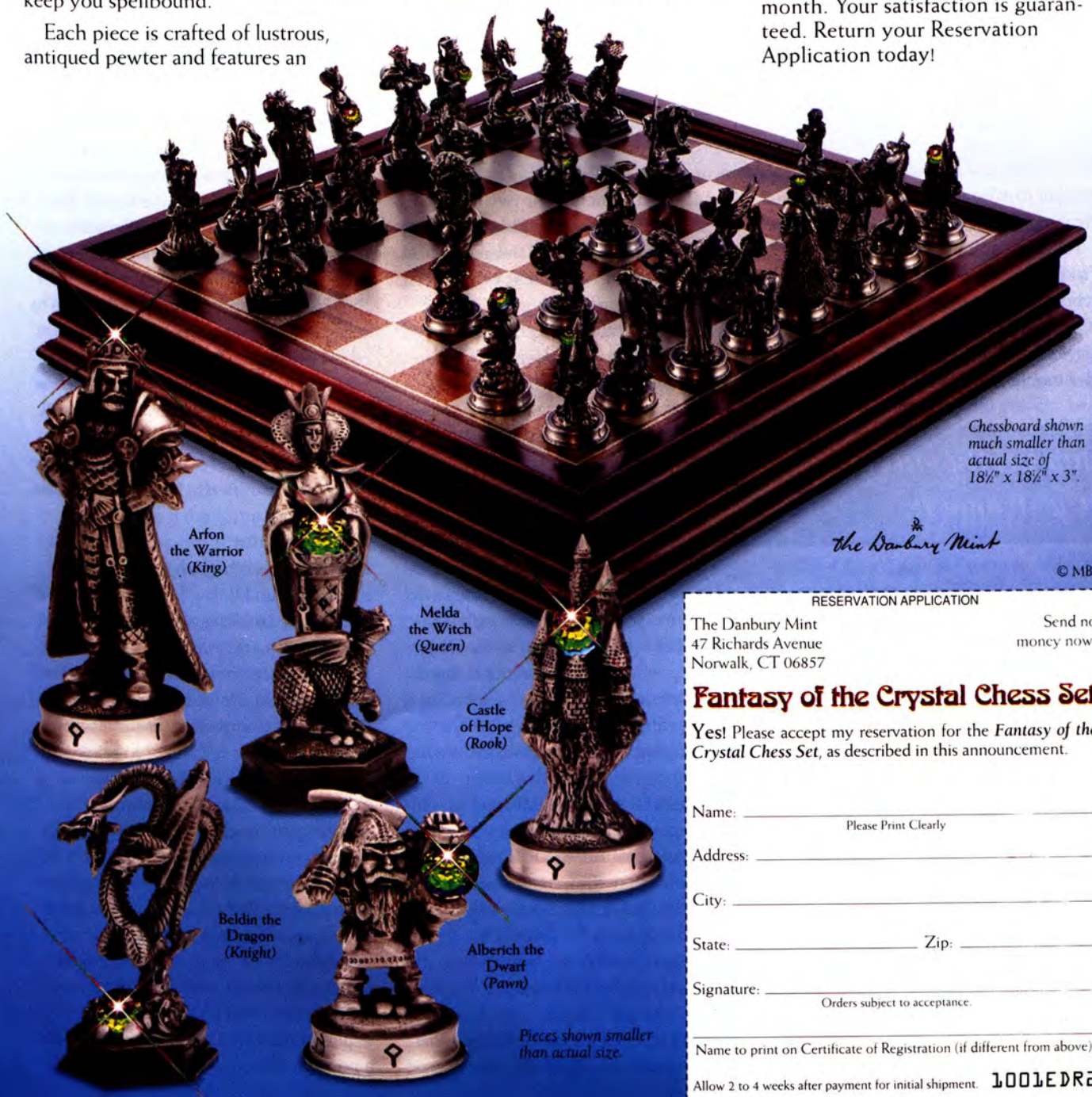
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Melda the Witch (Queen)
Castle of Hope (Rook)
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Question of the Month

Respond to the Question of the Month or any other roleplaying topic by mailing "Forum," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA; dmail@wizards.com. Include your full name and mailing address; we won't print a letter sent anonymously. We'll withhold your name or print your full address if you wish.

Would you like to see 8th- and 9th-level Priest spells? If so, how should the *resurrection* spell be treated?

A Game Must Grow

I have been playing the AD&D® game since 1978. Initially, I started with the basic rules, quickly went on to the advanced rules, and have stuck with them through 1st Edition, 2nd Edition, and now the PLAYER'S OPTION® rulebooks. I have anticipated each release with excitement and have never been let down. They have added flexibility and wonder to my games. Now I am becoming intrigued by the talk of a 3rd Edition.

I have thought for quite some time that the folks at TSR were thinking about it, but with the recent introduction of the "Question of the Month" to *DRAGON® Magazine*, it seemed they were giving the idea more consideration. To me, a 3rd Edition is inevitable. There must be one for the game to grow beyond its current scope. After reading the letters in "Forum" on the subject of 3rd Edition, what fails to come up is the notion of the growth of the AD&D game. People write to explain why they do not want a 3rd Edition, the main complaint being that they already have many rulebooks and would not want to start buying them all over again. Another complaint is that they are worried that 3rd Edition will not be compatible with their 2nd-Edition rulebooks. In all honesty, could you imagine the folks at TSR bringing out a 3rd Edition that was not compatible with 2nd Edition? How insane would they have to be to do that? Not only would they alienate a tremendous amount of their loyal fans, but also they would cut off a large amount of revenue from those new gamers who want to buy 3rd Edition and get some of the previous books as well.

Second Edition was vastly different from 1st Edition. (Anyone who says otherwise is not only has to jump on an AD&D discussion group to see the two loyal camps of 1st-Edition gamers and 2nd-Edition gamers.) The two editions are still extremely compatible. I am a 2nd-Edition gamer (who also uses PLAYER'S OPTION rulebooks), but half of my adventures are from 1st Edition.

What about the worry of having to buy the rulebooks over again? Do you know of any new edition of a roleplaying game where you had to do that? Sure, some revisions involve a new edition of one or two of the major supplements, but that's about it. Look at *Shadowrun**; they brought out a 3rd Edition, and the only new book they are bringing out for that is *The Grimoire*. But you do not have to buy the new books, and the revised editions are only for the players' convenience.

I honestly cannot see TSR publishing new versions of the Complete Handbooks in a 3rd-Edition format. If anything, the ideas in the Complete Handbooks will be incorporated into the main body of the 3rd-Edition rulebook. The AD&D game has grown into a plethora of rulebooks as time has gone by, and while there is nothing wrong with that, it must stop at some point. Not everybody uses all of the rulebooks that are out there, but wouldn't it be nice if they did?

That's what 3rd Edition should do. Okay, I know it's a bit of a fantasy (no pun intended) to think that a 3rd Edition will not have its supplements, but I do not see it having a dozen Complete Handbooks or three PLAYER'S OPTION rulebooks. Let TSR take the best of these books and make it into an even more brilliant game. Can you imagine how many first-timers or ex-AD&D gamers they might be able to attract if this was to happen? No longer would the collection of rules be a daunting task, for the majority of the rules would be in the one book. I am pretty sure a 3rd Edition will come, and I welcome it.

Jason Sivyer
Perth, Western Australia

I am pretty sure a 3rd Edition will come, and I welcome it.

Run the Game

I am writing with a simple premise in mind. I began DMing four years ago in a mish-mash of fantasy settings, including the DRAGONLANCE® and BIRTHRIGHT® settings, as well as my own custom-made fantasy world. I have had a relatively steady group of players for the last three years, and we have formed a sort of creative collective from which a surprisingly developed fantasy setting is growing. As more friends play in it and become involved in its creation, they grow more interested in running a game of their own. This brings me to my point: to anyone who plays and wishes to become a Dungeon Master in his or her own right, I shout, with much zeal, go for it! Being a DM is the most rewarding experience in gaming and should not be a position that anyone is intimidated by.

A few of my friends have asked what exactly is required to be an effective Dungeon Master. Although I cannot truly answer this question, I can give a few pointers to those who wish to DM but are intimidated by the position's responsibilities.

1. No game is too small. While I would agree that an adventuring party of twelve characters would be a bit cumbersome and could be dull for quiet players, the opposite is not true at all. When you begin, one or two players work quite nicely, and quality rapport can be established with each player. It makes communication easy, which can effectively liven up even timid roleplayers and make your new challenge of refereeing less demanding for you. I have had some of my most fun gaming sessions with one or two players.

2. When things get bad for your PCs, always be objective. Put yourself into the places of your NPCs. Play them as you think they would act. Say things they would say. Develop silly idiosyncrasies to make them come alive , but let your PCs' actions determine how they react. If a character consistently does stupid things (like picking the pocket of a guard who is leading him to the gallows for a dozen or so previous offenses of the same nature in the same hour), pity on your part only lets the character know that such behavior is fine by you.

Don't be afraid to use your authority, but use it to keep the game fun, not simply because you can. If you think a player is being annoying, never take it out on that player's character (such as making a chandelier fall on his character's head ... but I must say, that can be funny). It's petty and wrong. Just ease up a little and things get better. Encouragement goes much farther than punishment.

3. Realism is a tool you can use to help your players get more from your game and have fun playing it, so don't be afraid to make your game as "real" as you can. Keeping track of mundane statistics becomes second nature after only one or two sessions, so I don't hesitate to use many optional rules, such as encumbrance and weapon speed. Things like these add even more detail to a character or monster which brings me to my next point ...

4. If you don't like a rule, or you think it takes away from the fun of your game, don't use it. Bottom line: it's your game, so do what you feel is best in the way of helping your players have a good time. Fun is what it's all about. I'm sure you learned that as a player anyway. Oh, and if you don't know what to do in any situation, make something up. Percentile dice are a DM's best friend. By the way, if something incredibly bizarre happens to a PC, try what we call a "Personality Check." Add the character's Intelligence and Wisdom scores together, then add his or her level as well. This is a Personality Score. Roll 2d20 and 1d10 and achieve that score or less. This is a measure of just how much a character knows about life in general and just how much craziness he can handle. This is a good example of the "make-something-up" maxim.

5. Party cohesion is important. The better group members get along with one another, the better off they are when they meet whatever struggles they might be facing. A little inter-party conflict is wonderful for roleplaying, but don't let it get out of hand. Incite feelings of companionship between the players if you have to. Let each player know that when it comes down to a character's life and death, his companions are all he has. It does a lot to bring players together.

6. Keep the game moving, but let the players do it. Never railroad the players into doing what you want them to do. If you make it enticing enough, the players will do anything, but make sure it is fun for them, not just something you want them to play. If the players sit there around the table and stare at you, stare back and ask them what they are doing. It'll make them do something, trust me. And always remember to include every player at your table. Ask each player what his character is doing every so often, just to keep things moving.

7. The biggest ordeal I have had to face as a DM is character death. Never be afraid to kill a character during the course of a game. It is going to happen sooner or later, if you're worth your salt as a DM. Things happen, plans go awry, and PCs die. Don't kill characters just because you can, but be realistic about it. It is the only way to learn to "be" another person, in roleplaying terms, and besides, would it be fun to be a hero if the risk of death wasn't looming over one's head at almost every turn? It happens, so don't feel badly if it does. Let the player know he didn't mess up and move on.

Good luck to all of you. Be a DM and have fun with it. If you do, your players will as well.

Matt Hinds
Muncie, IN

Being a DM is the most rewarding experience in gaming...

Make Wizards Fun

Since I live in a small town, issue #251 was the first issue I was able to get, but it was excellent and I will continue buying them as long as they appear in our shops. "The Ecology of the Ghoul" was especially good; it unnerved me, and the next time I run into a ghoul you can be sure I won't react as casually as I have in the past!

I have played for five years and DMed for three, and I think TSR should reprint the *Complete Sha'ir's Handbook*, with or without the AL-QADIM® setting. At least three of the subclasses, Sha'irs, Clockwork Mages, and Spellslayers, are suitable for any campaign, Arabian or not, and the Sorcerers are as different from normal Wizards as Alienists or anything else. Also, for those of us without the cash for the well-done *Wizard's Spell Compendium*, new spells never hurt.

Since this debate has been raging forever (we even talk about it out here in the boonies), I feel I should comment on 3rd Edition. A good idea if it's just to unify the rules. Include PLAYER'S OPTION and DM'S OPTION books, psionics, and please have a book just about magic with a spell list and descriptions of everything included in *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*, plus those from the Necromancer's, Sha'ir's, and Wizard's

handbooks. Please also include the subclasses from the *Tome of Magic*, *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*, *The Complete Ninja's Handbook*, *The Complete Shai'r's Handbook*, and the *Complete Wizard's Handbook* in one format so we can use them, and reprint the Wild Surge Table.

There are only two actual rules changes I would make, and both pertain to my favorite class, the Wizard. For one thing, auto spell disruption upon a hit is just too unfair, both for PCs and NPCs. We use this rule: if the Wizard (or Priest) is hit with a physical force (weapons, force missiles, etc.), they can make a Constitution/Fitness check to "hold on" to the spell. If it is a powerful distraction, they can make a Wisdom/Willpower check. In either case, there could be penalties and bonuses, which are up to the DM. Obviously, if the mage in question gets hit in the head with a boulder, it's going to be more disruptive than a minor gash from a dagger. Also, we consider only the time from when the Wizard's initiative without casting time to when the spell takes effect as when the Wizard is actually casting the spell; hits earlier in the round don't affect it. We have not found this unbalancing in the least.

Memorizing spells? Humbug!

The other rule people might find offensive is that we let all spells be free theurgies or magics for fixed cost, and we only make the caster spend his points when he casts the spell. The end result is something like the MP in *Final Fantasy*-type games; the Wizard begins the day with a batch of spell points and uses them up as the day goes on. While this is too major a shift to be a new rule, I suggest TSR provide it as an optional rule. Again, we have not found it disruptive to the game; this simply brings the Wizard and Priest up to the level of the Psionicist.

The reason we use this rule is because we play for *fun*. We like to play Wizards sometimes, and none of us (perhaps twelve or thirteen in all) likes the old system. Memorizing spells? Humbug! This does not significantly increase a Wizard's power (we have tested it for at least a year) but prevents those "why-didn't-I-memorize-this" headaches. It also lets the utility spells be used more often; no one I know memorizes *affect normal fires* or *Nystul's magic aura*, but sometimes players come up with creative uses for everyday spells on the fly. Please don't have a knee-jerk "it's too powerful" reaction; try using it in a new campaign sometime, where not everyone is a Mage and see how they stack up. Remember, in the front of the 1st-Edition *Player's Handbook*, they said: "If you don't like a rule, change it."

Ian Mathers
Kincardin, Ontario, Canada

More on Schools

There have been a few responses to my suggestion in issue #247 that the Alteration school of magic had some inappropriate spells in it. Matt Wilson in issue #251 disagreed with my assertion, stating that Alteration spells alter reality and are thus appropriate.

I would like to challenge this with a counter example. It is my assertion that if this sort of reasoning is permitted, then any school of magic can be used for any spell. For example, take the Conjuration/Summoning school. There are several ways this school can be used to simulate other schools as follows:

Abjuration: Abjuration spells can be divided into spells that get rid of things and spells that keep things away. In both cases, we could use Conjuration or Summoning to simulate this effect. For example, banishing creatures from the Lower Planes could be accomplished by directing energy from the Positive Material Plane (or perhaps one of the Upper Planes) at the offending fiends. Similarly, effects like *protection from evil* could involve conjuring a barrier from the Positive Material Plane and integrating it with various energies from other planes to keep out conjured creatures.

Divination: Simply rule that the spell works by summoning an extraplanar creature with the given knowledge.

Enchantment/Charm: This school has to be treated on a case-by-case basis. *Sleep* can be simulated by Conjuring some sleep gas from (perhaps) the Paraelemental Plane of Smoke. *Charm person* could briefly summon something like a vampire.

Evocation/Invocation: This one is really too easy. It's trivial to say that *fireball* works by gating in Elemental Fire rather than creating the energy. Since Evocation always involves creating energy or matter, it is simple to say that rather than creation, requisition is substituted.

Illusion/Phantasm: Spells such as *demi-shadow monsters* draw upon the Plane of Shadow for quasi-realism. There's no reason that Conjurers can't access the Plane of Shadow directly; based on this precedent, it could be argued that all illusions have a connection to the Plane of Shadow and thus include a Conjuration component.

Necromancy: Instead of animating the dead, rule instead that the undead spirits are summoned into the corpses.

You'll note that I omitted Alteration; Alteration spells are too diverse in their effects to classify as any one school, but any one spell's effects can easily fit with another school.

No doubt these explanations sound somewhat forced. This is intentional; in my opinion, while it is possible to shoehorn just about anything into the "alter reality" school, it seems equally forced in many cases. We don't want all the schools to look the same; Alteration can already accomplish many useful things denied to other schools (*fly*, *haste*, *polymorph*, and the like) without having to duplicate the effects of other schools (*burning hands*, *color spray*, *delude*, *gust of wind*). A reasonable focus for the schools, in my opinion, is as follows:

Abjuration: Defensive magic and magic that banishes other magic.

Alteration: Transmuting objects or creatures or gaining new abilities temporarily.

Conjuration/Summoning: Access to other Planes and summoning creatures.

Divination: Finding what is hidden.

Enchantment/Charm: Attacking creatures in a way that does not directly harm them, and enhancing objects.

Evocation/Invocation: The creation of new objects and releasing dangerous energies.

Illusion/Phantasm: Creating illusions and other deceptions, including those that are potentially lethal.

Necromancy: Anything to do with death or the undead.

Obviously, there are some crossovers, but there aren't too many effects that fit into more than one of these schools. It should be remembered that a Diviner can cast more than just Divination spells—it's not necessary that there be Divinations that can destroy armies of goblins.

On another matter, there has been some discussion on level limits for demihumans. I've never been satisfied with these; if the demihuman PC is single classed, then he isn't significantly better than an equivalent level human. If he is multiclassed, then for a long time they are superior to their human comrades, and then they just get retired.

There are two issues here: first, the single vs. multiclass issue, and second, the level limits themselves. I've never understood the reasoning for the artificial distinction between humans and demihumans. Why are humans alone denied multiclass privileges, when creatures as diverse as elves and dwarves are not?

Multiclass characters have always been overpowered. An examination of the experience point tables reveals that the experience requirements increase exponentially. This means that a multiclass character is only one level behind his single-classed friends, and given the choice between a 5/5 Fighter/Mage and a 6th-level Fighter, which would you take?

I personally do not permit multiclass characters of any kind in my campaigns. If a player wants to try something like that, I work with the player to create a new class using the guidelines in the *DMG*.

This brings me to level limits. The usual argument is that if long-lived elves are not limited in their maximum level, then human heroes pale in comparison.

In the AD&D game, experience points are awarded only for killing monsters and gathering treasure (officially, at any rate). I submit that if the only way to advance in level is to constantly seek out new conflicts, then no adventurer is particularly likely to die of old age (even a half-orc). This does not take into account the fact that powerful PCs of any race have several options available to unnaturally extend their lifespan.

In 2nd Edition, of course, we get experience points for doing appropriate class-related activities. But in 2nd Edition, there is an overall limit of 20th level (even *DM Option®: High-Level Campaigns* only extends this to 30th level). This is quite achievable to even a short-lived human—the long-lived races simply stay at their high level for longer than the human (although I suspect that high level characters of any race have sufficient enemies to ensure that they die of unnatural causes).

The simple fact of the matter is that in neither game does age really play a part.

"Quiet! The creature is stirring!"

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I can't remember ever playing a campaign that took a large enough length of game time to ever threaten a PC with old age (barring unnatural aging, of course).

A 500-year-old-elven Wizard likely has many spells at his disposal, and a long time to prepare his defenses. But it's not too difficult for a human Wizard to live that long, either—many methods exist in the core AD&D rules (lots of potions of *longevity*, becoming a shade, becoming a lich, *magic jar* to a younger body, or the most direct route of a *wish* to possess an elven lifespan—assuming that the DM allows this to work).

If multiclass combinations are dispensed with, then level limits can go, too. "Basic" D&D® allowed demihumans to still benefit from experience points; another solution (perhaps for 3rd Edition) would be to explore this possibility in the AD&D game.

Gary Sturgess
Bentley, Western Australia

Overwhelmed by Ignorance

I cannot stay quiet any longer! I have played and been a DM for over 15 years and I have read *DRAGON Magazine* on and off since I started playing. Many articles in the "Forum" are intelligent and help with the game, but I have recently picked up Issue #253, and I am overwhelmed by the ignorance of some of the letters I read. I can't say that this has been the first time I have seen these types of letters, but I can say that the "straw has broken the camel's back" with this issue.

I had the pleasure of being at the GEN CON® Game Fair this year and even met a few of the design team members during a 3rd-Edition seminar in which they asked our opinions about what we want to see stay and go in the AD&D game. I heard a few good things, but the majority of the discussion was "I don't use this" or "I don't like that," and then I thought of all the rule changes I have made. I use THAC0 and AC (and that might be changing), but a lot of the rules I have adapted for quicker combat, more fun and less dice rolling. My concerns are simple.

Name one DM who uses every rule (not options) in every book published by TSR. I have the majority of the books, and I know the quantity of little rules for jumping, swimming, climbing for non-thieves, etc. that have destroyed forests full of trees to give the DM ammunition against the countless number of rules lawyers out there. I am saying to all the DM's out there, "Quit making excuses for your inability to control your game!" If the party isn't smart enough to run away from the wraith that is going to drain every ounce of life out of them, then they deserve to die. If the player can't roll 3d6 and make a character that fits every class, then so be it. I played for many years before I started DMing, and my DMs have had the confidence in me and my fellow players to throw trolls against us at 1st level. Yeah, we ran more often than not, but we also set up traps, ambushes, and actually thought of ways to kill the trolls without standing toe-to-toe with them and dying. I have noticed in the last three to five years that players are more than willing to fight everything they see and think about their poor decision as they are rolling the dice to make a new character.

For the DMs who don't like the harshness of the "So be it!" attitude, then I have to remind you that you are the Dungeon Master, master of all that happens in the world, and therefore you can choose monsters that don't drain energy or modify them so they don't overwhelm the heroes. Quit saying, "That is not right ..." or "The article concerning _____ is wrong!" Live with the fact that every—dare I say *good*—DM out there has adapted the rules to fit their gaming styles and the enjoyment of the players involved.

To summarize and quit my ranting, I would just like to say "Quit your complaining about the rules. Accept the fact that not everyone is meant to DM (that may mean you), and give your players the chance to think and prove themselves worthy of playing a game we all love!"

Joseph A. Hoffman
Carpentersville, IL

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By Ray Winninger

Last month, we resolved some basic logistical and administrative issues—how many players is best, what rulebooks to use, and so forth. With that out of the way, it's time to start creating the campaign environment.

Before we start play, before we even attempt to design our first adventure, we should flesh out the campaign world. What's our fantasy world like? What sort of adventures await our brave players?

The First Rule of Dungeoncraft: Never force yourself to create more than you must.

These are a couple of the more basic questions. Before we go too far, though, it's time to introduce you to the First Rule of Dungeoncraft: *Never force yourself to create more than you must.*

Write this rule on the inside cover of your *Dungeon Master® Guide*. Failure to obey the First Rule has been the downfall of too many campaigns. You shouldn't feel compelled to create more information or detail than you'll need to conduct the next couple of game sessions. When some DMs sit down to create a new campaign, they are strongly tempted to draw dozens of maps, create hundreds of NPCs, and write histories of the campaign world stretching back thousands of years. While having this sort of information at your disposal can't hurt, it probably won't help—not for a long time yet. Spending lots of time on extraneous details now only slows you down, perhaps to the point where you lose interest in the game before it starts. For now, the goal is to figure out exactly what information you'll need to conduct your first few game sessions. You can fill in the holes later, as it becomes necessary. This approach not only gets you up and playing as quickly as possible, but also keeps your options open and allows you to tailor the campaign around the input of the players and the outcome of their adventures. In this spirit, you should aim to start your campaign as soon as you can, while doing as little preliminary design as possible.

With that in mind, you face an important decision at the start. You must choose whether you want to use a published AD&D® setting or create one of your own. There are both advantages and disadvantages associated with either path.

TSR's settings were all created by expert game designers, so they're full of great ideas. They also come packaged with professionally crafted maps and play aids, and there are dozens of published adventures available for most of them, which might help you get through the occasional dry spell when you don't feel like creating your own adventures. Surprisingly, however, none of the settings is terribly appropriate for inexperienced Dungeon Masters. Most of them concentrate on presenting the sort of information that's unlikely to directly influence an actual game session for quite some time (detailed histories, cultural backgrounds, etc.)

Creating your own setting, on the other hand, requires you to begin from scratch. Ultimately, you must generate your own maps and supply your own ideas. While this can be challenge, successfully tackling it is one of the most rewarding experiences you can have with the AD&D game.

For the purposes of future columns, I'm going to assume that you'll be creating your own campaign world. If you'd rather use one of the TSR settings, the advice in "Dungeoncraft" will still be useful. You'll be surprised how much of the work that goes into starting a new campaign remains the same under both options. If you decide to use a published setting, you might be able to skip a few of the steps that follow, but we'll probably catch up to you within the next column or two. Note that those of you who create your own settings should still take the time to browse through the various AD&D supplements and adventure modules down at your local hobby

shop, even those specifically tailored to one of TSR's published settings. Most of TSR's AD&D material is easily adapted to just about any campaign setting with relatively little effort. Later, you can look to the occasional module for a welcome and temporary relief from your design duties.

Starting the World

How does one go about creating an entire fantasy world from scratch? After all, it sounds like a lot of work. The secret is to remember the First Rule and to keep in mind that "creating the world" is what you and your players are going to do together over the next several weeks, months, or years of play. For now, your job is to create only those details necessary to get the ball rolling.

Your starting point is the world's basic concept or "hook." Most successful AD&D settings have a single, easily digested characteristic that makes them unique and interesting. Ultimately, it's this concept that captures your players' imaginations and draws them into the game. Making an imaginary world come to life is one of the most difficult tasks you face as the Dungeon Master. The more unique and interesting your world, the easier it will be for your players to accept its reality. A good "hook" goes a long way toward immediately signaling the world's unique characteristics to the players. Think about your favorite fantasy worlds from books, movies, and games and try to identify what it is about each of these settings that makes it different from all the rest. Try to express these differences in no more than a paragraph or a few sentences. This is exactly the sort of distinguishing characteristic or hook you need for your own world.

Most hooks can be broken down into five categories: culture, environment, class/race, opposition, and situations.

Culture

Perhaps your game world is set against a cultural backdrop not encountered in the typical AD&D game. For instance, you could run a game based on the cultures of ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, or the ancestors of the American Indians. You can then set about adapting the AD&D game's magic systems, character classes, and monsters to this new environment. Depending upon the culture you choose, TSR has published some excellent sourcebooks and settings that might inspire you. Some of these titles are out of print, but you might be able to find them at local stores, game conventions, or Internet auction sites.

While settings based on cultural hooks can be interesting and rewarding, they're often difficult to create. To do a good job of adapting the AD&D rules to your chosen backdrop, you'll probably have to do some serious research and maybe a little game design to patch the few holes that pop up. For a detailed example of the sort of work involved, pick up any of the TSR products mentioned in the sidebars. One obvious benefit of a cultural hook is that it has the potential to tell you and your players an awful lot about the game world. If you base your game around an ancient Egyptian culture, for instance, you know something about the setting (largely desert), some of the adventures the players can expect (exploring hidden tombs), some of the monsters the players are likely to encounter (sphinxes, the phoenix, various desert serpents) and something about the world's mythology and theology (both based on ancient Egyptian beliefs).

AD&D Game Settings Based on Real-World Cultures

Culture	A Good Resource Is ...
Ancient Greek	*Age of Heroes*
Ancient Rome	*Glory of Rome*
Arabian	AL-QADIM® Setting
Aztec/Incan	Maztica Setting
Crusades	*Crusades*
Celtic	*Celts*
Japanese	*Oriental Adventures* & the Kara-Tur Setting
Medieval France	*Charlemagne's Paladins*
Mongolian	*The Horde* Boxed Set
Renaissance (European)	*A Mighty Fortress*
Vikings	*Vikings*

Popular AD&D Game Fantasy Settings

Campaign World	Best Described As ...
DRAGONLANCE® Setting	Epic Adventure and Romance
FORGOTTEN REALMS® Setting	Heroic Campaigning and High Magic
GREYHAWK® Setting	Classic Sword & Sorcery Adventures
RAVENLOFT® Setting	Gothic Fantasy Horror

Environment

Another option is to use a particular environment as your hook. Imagine a continent that consists almost exclusively of forests, mountains, swamps, jungles, deserts, or islands. Note that your choice of environment can also tell you a few things about your game world. The idea of a forest world, for instance, suggests that elves are more prevalent than they are in other AD&D settings. A desert world suggests that its cultures are largely nomadic and that finding drinkable water might be an important part of many adventures. A world that consists of an enormous archipelago suggests that seafaring plays an important role in the campaign.

Class/Race

You might also think about basing a hook around one or more of the AD&D game's character classes or races. Imagine a world in which all the player characters are members of an ancient order of Wizards, or another in which all the

adventurers are members of rival orc tribes (in which case you might want *The Complete Book of Humanoids*). Most of TSR's Class Handbooks give you some advice on how you might run an entire campaign built around a single character class.

While campaigns built around such a hook can be lots of fun, they're often difficult to pull off. First of all, the various character classes and races work together to balance the AD&D rules. By tampering with the available choices, you can upset that balance. As an example, think about how much more difficult the average adventure becomes if none of the player characters are Clerics and the party has no access to healing spells. Similarly, lots of players prefer or dislike various roles. By limiting the available options up front, you're making it harder for some players to create characters they like.

Situation

Sometimes, a simple situation can serve as an effective campaign hook. Imagine, for instance, a world on the brink of apocalypse. Age-old prophecies predict that a great cataclysm will befall the world just a few short years after you begin play. It sounds like the players' job to uncover the true nature of this cataclysm so they can try to prevent it. Similarly, think about a campaign dominated by a conspiracy comprised of evil dopplegangers who have replaced many of the world's most important nobles at the behest of a tanar'ri prince (sort of a medieval version of *The X-Files*). Games based upon a situational hook allow you plenty of room for creativity and give you an opportunity to create a memorable campaign. The possibilities for intriguing situations are endless. If you're finding it hard to invent your own, you can always borrow a concept from a favorite book or movie and adapt it to an AD&D setting.

Sometimes, a simple situation can serve as an effective campaign hook.

Opposition

The most commonly encountered opposition is another possibility for an effective hook. In this instance, your campaign is dominated by a single monster or a closely related group of monsters. The exact monster you choose should suggest to yourself and your players something about the world. For instance, a world dominated by dinosaurs probably has a primitive "land that time forgot" appeal. Likewise, a world dominated by undead suggests that the campaign environment has been subjected to some sort of evil curse and that the ultimate aim of the player characters is to lift that curse. In fact, if you're interested in running this type of game, it's important that you select an adversary that suggests similar possibilities. Deciding that your campaign is set in a world dominated by stirges or umber hulks is bound to confuse your players and isn't likely to help you create the campaign environment.

To get your creative juices flowing, here are a few more ideas:

✔ A world in which all humans, elves, dwarves, and orcs are psionic.

✔ A world which hasn't seen a sunrise in more than five hundred years. This world is plagued by famines and suffering. Ultimately, you might allow the players to solve the mystery of the eternal night and restore the light.

✔ A world in which humans are incredibly long-lived or even immune to death from natural causes.

If you're having a hard time choosing between several appealing possibilities, don't fret. Pick the possibilities that are easiest to develop and move on. You can always supplement your world with a new location built on an entirely different hook at a later date. For instance, if you're having a hard time choosing between a world dominated by dragons (opposition hook) and a world dominated by Wizards (class/race hook), go with the dragons. Later, you can introduce a separate continent ruled by Wizards. In fact, every time you introduce such an area you have an opportunity to devise a rationale that connects its hook to your other hook(s) and adds depth to your game world.

Returning to our example, let's suppose that, across much of the world, all the most important rulers are dragons and that most wars and international affairs stem from conflicts or alliances between these dragons. While humans can rise to the rank of duke or baron, they are ultimately little more than slaves or vassals of the dragons. Eventually though, the players discover a large hidden island in the middle of a vast sea. This island is ruled by Wizards, the ancestors of whom successfully rebelled against the dragons and established their own secret kingdom more than a thousand years ago. The Wizards' ancestors defeated their reptilian masters by stealing the secret of magic from them. It turns out that every human Wizard in the world ultimately owes his ancestry or tutelage to an inhabitant or former inhabitant of the island. Working together, these two hooks have just provided us with some rich backstory and fodder for future adventures. We now know how mankind learned the art of sorcery, and we can suppose that at least some of the dragons are interested in finding the island and recovering magical treasures stolen long ago.

For the campaign I'll write about in future installments of "Dungeoncraft," I'm going to select an environmental hook—a world covered almost entirely by various forests. Although the First Rule precludes me from taking the hook too far at this point, before I proceed, it's worth quickly examining some of the hook's implications to see what they might tell me about the game world.

To me, a forest world suggests an uncivilized planet dominated by Mother Nature. It's not hard to take this a step further and envision a "living" world that is essentially one colossal organism. Perhaps the planet itself is the major deity in the campaign and a vast

network of dungeon passageways beneath its surface form the living deity's veins and organs.

Next, I'll think about basic locations and geography. For variety's sake, I plan to eventually incorporate all sorts of forests into this world—tropical jungles near the equator, conifer forests near the icy polar regions, and thick marshes on a few of the coasts. I like the idea of outpost "cities" consisting of a series of interlocking platforms and treehouses spread across various levels of large deciduous forests. The geography of a forest world also suggests a geopolitical situation that revolves around the domination of strategically placed trails through the thick woods. It's worth noting that farmland is going to be relatively rare on such a world, so those few patches of land not blanketed in trees are going to be very valuable.

Finally, it's worth thinking about how the hook might tie into the various monsters, character classes, and character races that make up the AD&D game. Obviously, I have an opportunity to do something special with any or all of the plant-related monsters. Perhaps treants (from the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ book) are heralds or avatars formed when the planet god instills some of its consciousness into a tree. The planet god uses the treants to protect its interests and to impose its will upon its inhabitants. Clearly, there is a special role for Druids and Rangers to play on a forest world. Druids are probably the special servants of the planet god. Rangers might be the planet god's chosen warriors; perhaps their class abilities stem from a special bond with the essence of the planet god.

While I can explore any or all of these ideas in much greater detail, I have more than enough material to get started. As the campaign progresses, I'm sure I'll develop the religious customs of the Druids, the nature of the bond between the planet god and the treants, and the implications of the mystical bond between the Rangers and the forests. For now, I'm concentrating on assembling only enough information to get the first few game sessions off the ground.

Now that we've actually fleshed out some details of the campaign world, it's time to introduce you to the Second Rule of Dungeoncraft: *Whenever you design a major piece of the campaign world, always devise at least one secret related to that piece.*

AD&D is all about the players' attempts to explore your imaginary world, and nothing captures the thrill of exploration quite so effectively as discovering a secret. As you build your world, you should devise plenty of secrets for the players to unravel. Try to create a new secret every time you flesh out a major part of the campaign or create an important NPC. That should guarantee that your players always have new mysteries to uncover. Later, we're going to strew hints and clues all over the campaign world that foreshadow the events to come and help the players unravel some of these secrets. We might even design an adventure or two that revolves entirely around a secret. By introducing such hints weeks (and sometimes months or even years) before the players get to the bottom of a secret, you make your campaign world seem more carefully constructed and "alive." For now, don't worry about exactly how the players are going to unravel each secret or how long it will take them to solve each mystery. There's plenty of time to decide on those details as play progresses.

he Second Rule of Dungeoncraft: Whenever you design a major piece of the campaign world, always devise at least one secret related to that piece.

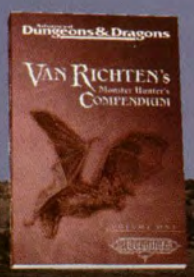
So, I need at least one secret that stems from my chosen hook and the few details I've sketched out. Two possibilities spring to mind, and I think they're both worth keeping. First, the "living planet" god suggests to me that somewhere in the campaign world, probably located atop the tallest mountain, there is a single enormous tree that is synonymous with the god's life essence. Felling this tree is the equivalent of dealing the god a serious if not mortal wound. Should this ever happen, the seasons of spring and summer will not come again for many years, many of the planet's forests will begin to wither and die, and the planet's Druids will lose their magical powers. Of course, the god and its followers are keenly aware of this weakness. All Druids of 9th level and above know the secret of the tree and its location. With the help of a handful of trusted Rangers and hordes of treants, they secretly conspire to defend it. Much later in the campaign, I'll probably design a series of adventures in which the tree is threatened, allowing the players to uncover its secret and safeguard the world by defending it. For the time being, I'll simply place a few key hints as to the tree's existence.

Second, I've decided that shambling mounds (from the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book) are actually former treant heralds of the planet god who became corrupted by the influence of an evil artifact and rebelled. When play begins, only the treants and the shambling mounds themselves are aware of the beasts' true nature. Later in the campaign, I might introduce the artifact that caused the mounds' downfall and lead the players to believe that it boasts a potent, benevolent enchantment. Only by unraveling the secret of the shambling mounds can they discover the true nature of the artifact and avoid its evil influence. Early in the campaign, I'll drop a few hints as to the origin of the mounds.

Join me in thirty days for "Worldbuilding, Part II" in which we'll take a look at establishing government and economics in an AD&D campaign.

The first D&D character created by Ray Winninger is now old enough to vote. Ray lives in Evanston, Illinois.

Pharaoh Ramses com



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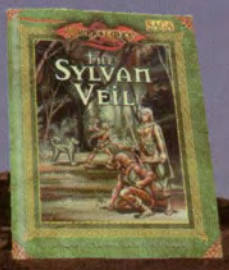

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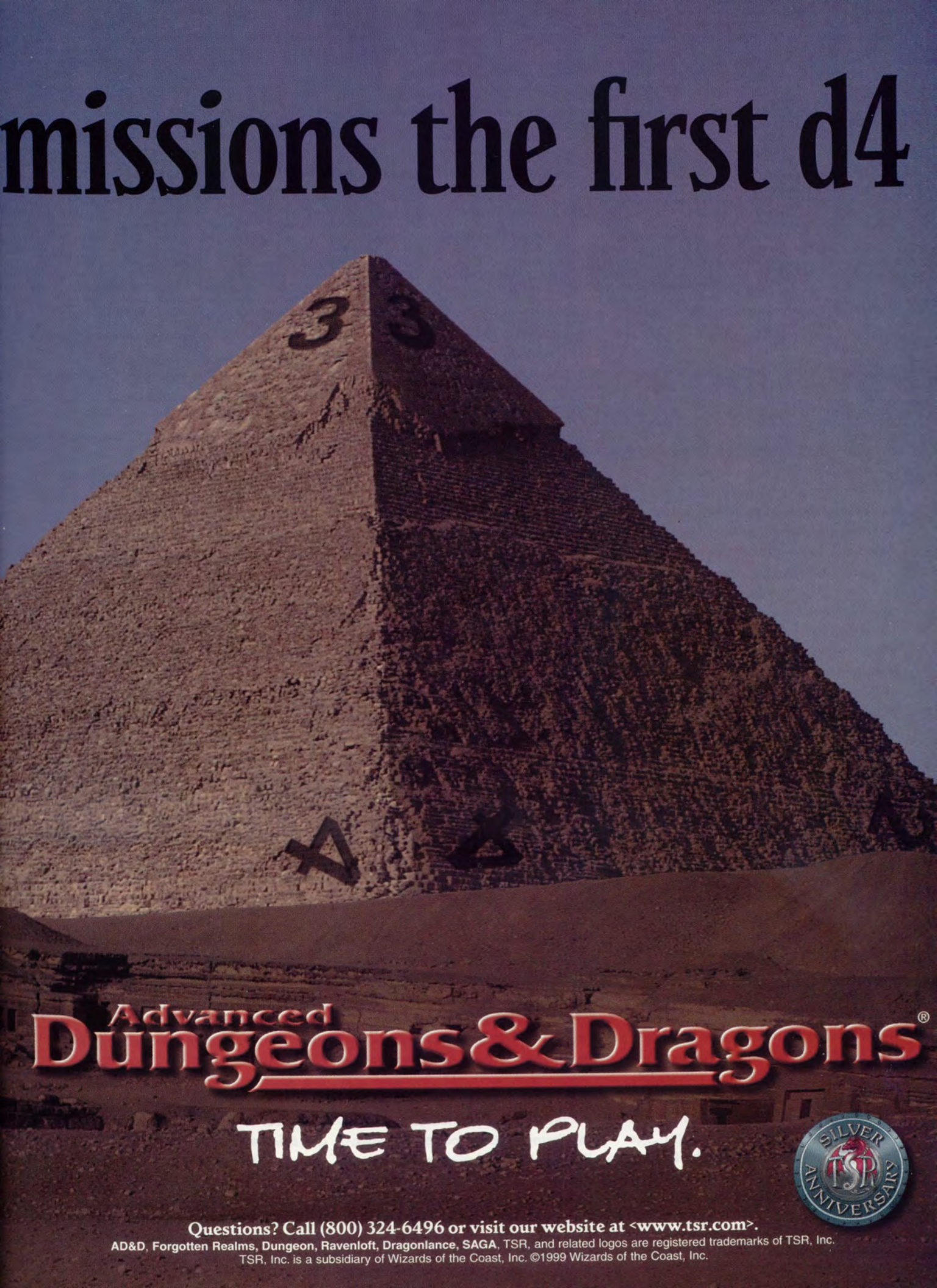

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Sage Advice

By Skip Williams

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The sage cannot make personal replies; please include no SASE with your questions.

This month, the Sage revisits some old advice, offers fresh advice on followers and various spells from the AD&D® game, then takes another side trip into the Alternity® game universe.

In issue #253, you said that the *holy word* spell and the various *power word* spells fill their entire areas of effect without regard to magical silence. Does this mean that these spells penetrate other types of barriers, too? Doesn't the description for the *holy word* spell state that the spell's secondary effects are disrupted by *deafness* or *silence*?

Solid barriers of any type block these spells, just as they block any other spell effect.

The secondary effects from a *holy word* spell (the ones shown on the table on the spell description) are indeed negated by *silence* or *deafness*. The spell's primary effect—driving extra-planar creatures off the caster's home plane and back to their own home planes—is not.

Can followers advance in levels? If so, how much experience do they earn? If followers can earn experience, does that make them PCs or NPCs?

Followers can earn experience and gain levels if they have character classes. They earn experience at half the normal rate, just as henchmen do.

Followers are NPCs just as henchmen are. It's usually a good idea to let players run their characters' followers. As the DM you're free to override a player's decision regarding a follower's action, especially when a player declares that a follower does something a PC probably wouldn't (such as sacrifice herself to save the player's favorite character). When in doubt about how a follower would act, refer to the loyalty and morale rules in Chapter 12 of the *DMG*.

an followers advance in level? If so, how much experience do they earn?

What is the proper way to apply the spell *moonweb* (from *Faiths & Avatars*)? I understand its use on doors and windows, and that seems reasonable; however, the description says it can be cast on people as well. Can the recipient move and fight while under the protection of the *moonweb* and be invulnerable to weapons and most spells? Can the person see out of the *moonweb*?

Since beings in the protected area can see through the *moonweb*, it would seem that a creature that has received the spell would see through it, too. The creature could also move freely, as it constitutes the "protected area." On the other hand, a *moonweb* reflects any spell effect or attack that tries to pass through it. That applies in both directions. If a creature tries to launch an attack after receiving a *moonweb* spell, it just winds up attacking itself.

How many times can a *teratism* spell (from issue #237) be cast on an animal?

I recommend once—or once per feature changed (for example, one spell to change color, one to add sound, one to change skin).

If an animal has been subject to a *teratism I* spell, can *teratism II* be used on the same animal?

Only to alter a feature not already altered by *teratism I* (and then only if you've taken the second option outlined above).

What are some reasonable limits to impose on *teratism* spells?

The spell descriptions set some reasonably strict ones. Just don't allow anything more radical than the examples given in the descriptions.

If a character is hit with a *polymorph other* spell and transformed into a duck or something, can the other characters cast *teratism* spells on it?

Only if the character has assumed a duck's mentality. Before that, the character might walk like a duck and quack like a duck, but he's not really a duck.

Can *teratism* be dispelled?

Yes.

The 9th-level Wizard spell *wildfire* allows the caster to create the effect of any Wizard spell of 8th level or lower. The Wizard need only have general knowledge of the spell and its effects; the spell need not be in the Wizard's own spellbooks. Are there any drawbacks, besides the possibility of a wild surge, to casting a *wildfire* spell? For example, could a character use it to cast a *permanency* spell and avoid the loss of a point of Constitution? How specific should this "general knowledge" be? Having it described to the *wildfire* caster? Having read about it somewhere? Having witnessed it in action?

In the case of a *wildfire* spell, when one creates a spell effect, one creates its side effects, too. If a Wizard creates a *permanency* effect through *wildfire*, the character loses a point of Constitution. If the Wizard uses *wildfire* to cast *limited wish*, the Wizard ages.

The DM must decide what "general knowledge" means. I suggest that any spell listed in *The Wizard's Spell Compendium* as "common" should be known to the caster well enough to duplicate with *wildfire*. Otherwise, the character needs to study a spell in a scroll or book or have witnessed it being cast before she can use *wildfire* to duplicate the effect.

How loosely should the term "animal" or "normal creature" be defined? Obviously many fantastic creatures in various settings are "normal" to those settings. But perhaps all fantasy creatures should be excluded.

Here's the general rule of thumb I use: If it didn't exist on the planet earth in historical times, it isn't an "animal" or "normal." (Dinosaurs are not animals.)

In many cases, it seems reasonable to make an exception for any creature that has no magical abilities and an Intelligence rating of "low" or less, particularly if the creature fills an ecological niche that a real earth animal normally would occupy. For example, the calot, banth, and thoat of Barsoom and the kank of Athas could be considered animals, especially when encountered on their home worlds.

Say there is a room full of clay golems. A character casts a *wall of stone* spell, effectively filling the entire room with stone. The spell description illustrates that the stone actually comes out of the ground and rises up. Would the wall crush the golems against the ceiling or surround the golems with stone (like water)? If neither, what would happen?

I find nothing in the spell description that implies that the stone rises up from the ground, but it sounds like a reasonable bit of DM-supplied color to me.

ow loosely should the term "animal" or "normal creature" be defined?

As a general rule, one cannot crush or displace an opponent with any wall spell (though you can place a wall so it falls over after it appears, perhaps crushing anything beneath it).

In the case you describe, the caster must shape the *wall of stone* to allow space for the golems; the spell fails if the caster does not do so. The golems receive saving throws vs. spell to avoid being trapped inside the wall.

If character who has cast a *mirror image* spell casts a *fly* spell, will his images fly as he does?

Yes, they fly exactly as the caster does. That is, the images continue to shift around within a 6' radius of the caster, even while the caster flies through the air. The images do not gain the power of independent flight from the *fly* spell.

Can a character use a *phantasmal force* spell to create a limited form of invisibility by simply producing the illusion of the space she is in without herself in it? Can the higher-level illusion spells be used in essentially the same way to eliminate any sounds or heat that the character's presence generates?

In a word, no. As "Sage Advice" has pointed out before, a character can create an illusory object and hide behind it, but she cannot disappear (except with a spell such as *invisibility*, whose description specifically allows the recipient to disappear). Likewise, a character can create illusory sounds to mask her own but cannot eliminate her own sounds.

When a character uses an illusion spell to create a creature (let's say, a dragon) that attacks an opponent, and the opponent fights back, what is the Armor Class of the illusion? I realize that the caster can manipulate the illusion to look like it has taken damage, but how does one determine if it is hit at all?

I suggest you use the illusory creature's actual Armor Class, penalized a point or three; perhaps a +3 penalty for the 1st-level *phantasmal force* spell, +2 for the 2nd-level *improved phantasmal force*, and so on.

When the caster elects to stop concentrating on an illusion, does he program the illusion to continue in its course of action? For instance, can the caster command the illusion to keep attacking for 2 rounds while the caster does something else, or does the illusion just sit there, static?

You need an *advanced illusion* spell or a *programmed illusion* spell to create an illusion that acts independently of the caster. Very simple actions are okay for an unattended illusion (marching, circling, eating), but nothing as complex as combat.

Please help me with this before I kill my fellow player characters. Is the damage caused by a *fire shield* spell fire damage? How do a *ring of fire resistance* and other types of fire immunity react to the heat version of this spell and vice-versa for the cold version? I have always thought that fire resistance of any kind would factor in to the damage, but others say that since the spell doesn't specifically state fire damage that it is not fire damage.

Well, try "killing" the argument with this: If the caster chooses the warm

ALTERNITY® Game Questions

On page 198 in the *Player's Handbook*, it says that for one-man spacecraft, the pilot uses his Vehicle Operation skill to use weapons, communications, sensors, navigation, computer, and defensive gear (instead of the usual System Operations skill multi-crewed ships use). Oh, and he has to fly the ship as well! How in the world (uh, the universe) is a poor guy supposed to manage all that? I can't find rules for this anywhere. The only clue is provided on page 160 of the *Gamemaster Guide*, which says the pilot can operate weapons any time he can perform an action, but doing so and performing a maneuver in the same phase adds difficulty to the maneuver check. Well, what happens when he wants to fly, shoot, deploy defenses, and assess tactics?

It's true that a hero operating a one-person vehicle uses his Vehicle Operation skill to operate any built-in system the vehicle has. This is so your average fighter jock doesn't have to have a whole boatload of System Operation skills just to get through one dogfight. I recommend that you treat only two-compartment ships as one-person vehicles. (In a PL 8 campaign, you might want to expand that to four-compartment ships, but only if the owner buys a really hefty computer and spends some extra money on automation.)

The vehicle combat rules in Chapter 12 of the *PH* cover one-person vehicle operation pretty well. The first thing to remember is the maneuvers rule on pages 198–199. Routine maneuvers are free. The vehicle operator can perform one routine maneuver each phase without spending an action or making a skill check.

Moderate and extreme maneuvers require 1 action (and a Vehicle Operation skill check) each. Any other activity (firing weapons, using the tactics skill, operating sensors, and so on) also requires an action and a skill check. Note that when something requires the operator to use an action, the hero must wait until a phase in which he would normally be entitled to perform an action before he can perform it. For example, a fighter jock who gets a bad action roll and cannot act until the Ordinary phase can only perform routine maneuvers (see *PH*, page 199) on the Amazing and Good phases. He cannot fire his weapons or do anything else that requires a skill check until the Ordinary phase.

In any case, the vehicle operator cannot exceed his normal allotment of actions each round; if the vehicle has five different systems and the character is only allowed 2 actions each round, only two of those systems can be used each round. Note that the GM might allow the hero to perform 2 actions at once (using the rule on page 51), such as turning sharply and firing weapons.

Can a solo pilot use Vehicle Operation in lieu of System Operation—*engineering* to reroute power around his ship to repair stun damage? Or is this the only case where System Operation is a must, and Vehicle Operation won't do as a "stand-in" skill?

The operator of a one-person vehicle can only use the Vehicle Operation skill to operate the vehicle, not repair it, modify it, juryrig it, or do anything else the GM decides does not qualify as vehicle operation. Vehicle Operation is never a substitute for the System Operation skill.

Would a space fighter pilot with the System Operations skill have any benefit at all over a pilot without that skill when zipping a fighter around?

For "zipping," no. Maneuvering a vehicle requires the Vehicle Operation skill.

In a situation where a hero has an appropriate System Operations skill, the hero is definitely better off using the skill if the skill score is higher than her Vehicle Operation skill score. For example, a pilot with a System Operation—*weapons* skill score higher than her Vehicle Operation skill score would be better off using the Weapons skill to fire a fighter's weapons. In some cases, however, the GM might not allow this. For example, it would be appropriate for the GM to require the character to use the lower Vehicle Operation skill score if the character fires the weapon during a phase in which she uses the 2 actions at once rule to perform a maneuver while firing.

version of the spell, it causes magical fire damage. If the caster chooses the chill version of the spell, it causes magical cold damage.

For some forms of fire or cold protection, you'll need to know how many dice of damage the *fire shield* spell inflicted. The number of dice is always the same as the number of dice in the attack that triggered the damage.

What is the effect of *blindness, deafness,* or *invisibility* on chances to surprise and be surprised, initiative, attack rolls, Armor Class, saving throws, movement rate, and spell failure?

You can get most of this information from Tables 57 and 72 in the *DMG*.

Table 57 gives surprise modifiers. If a character is deaf, all foes are effectively silenced (–2 surprise modifier for the deafened character). *Invisibility* has its own line on the table.

Table 72 gives movement and combat modifiers for darkness. Characters who are blind function exactly as if operating in total darkness.

Invisibility has a similar effect to total darkness. Attacks against invisible characters suffer a –4 penalty. Some DMs I know also penalize the defender's AC by 4 when attacked by an invisible opponent, but that's strictly a house rule.

Spellcasters must see their targets to cast spells, so *blindness* pretty much shuts down a spellcaster. Though the rules on spellcasting (see the Notes on Spells section in Appendix 2 of the *PH*) don't say so, I recommend excluding spells with a range of "touch" or "0" from the see-the-target requirement. In the case of a touch spell, the caster must still make an attack roll at a –4 penalty to touch an opponent he cannot see.

Invisible creatures are effectively immune to spells that must be targeted on them. Note that it's certainly possible to catch an invisible creature in a spell effect that fills an entire area—if the caster can see the spell's target point, he does not need to see anything else. Many DMs allow spellcasters to target invisible creatures when the characters know the creature's approximate location but cannot actually see it. For

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example, if an invisible creature leaves visible footprints, a character might surmise the creature's location and fire off a spell. In such a case, the invisible creature should receive a +4 saving throw bonus.

Deafness of any kind causes any spell with a verbal component to fail at least 20% of the time. Some forms of magical deafness, such as *holy word*, impose a higher spell failure chance.

Does a spell's reverse effect act exactly as the printed spell unless stated specifically in the spell description? For example, the reverse of *detect lie* has a longer duration than the standard spell does. My question is about *slay living;* elves cannot be raised with a *raise dead* spell. Since there is no further text discussing those that are affected, are elves immune to *slay living*? I feel that they should be. Unlike *detect lie*, there is no further text that states a different area of effect, range, duration, or creatures affected. If elves are affected by *slay living*, are all the limits off for the reverses of such spells as *animal growth*? That is, can I use the reverse to shrink humans?

That's just about the slickest bit of rules lawyering I've encountered in a long time. As it happens, *slay living* can kill any living creature—including elves—unless it has immunity to death magic (which elves do not have). This is a case in which the reverse has a much broader application than the normal spell, as *raise dead* can only restore life to "persons," but not persons who happen to be elves.

In general, however, your point is correct. (*Animal growth* and its reverse affect only animals.)

We have a player in our group who reads the *Player's Handbook* to say that Fighters cannot use miscellaneous magical items unless they are specifically for Fighters. Is this interpretation correct? Items such as *portable holes, boots of speed, brooches of shielding,* and *cloaks of protection* don't list any character class; this player says Fighters can't use these items.

I find it fascinating that this bold declaration comes from a player. What does your DM say?

Before deciding, your DM might want to take a look at the introductory material for miscellaneous magic (page 212 in the current printing of the *DMG*). This bit of text says that any miscellaneous magical item not marked for use by a specific class is usable by any class.

When he turned over this month's column, Skip Williams cryptically noted that slapping down rules lawyers is much more satisfying than slapping mosquitoes.

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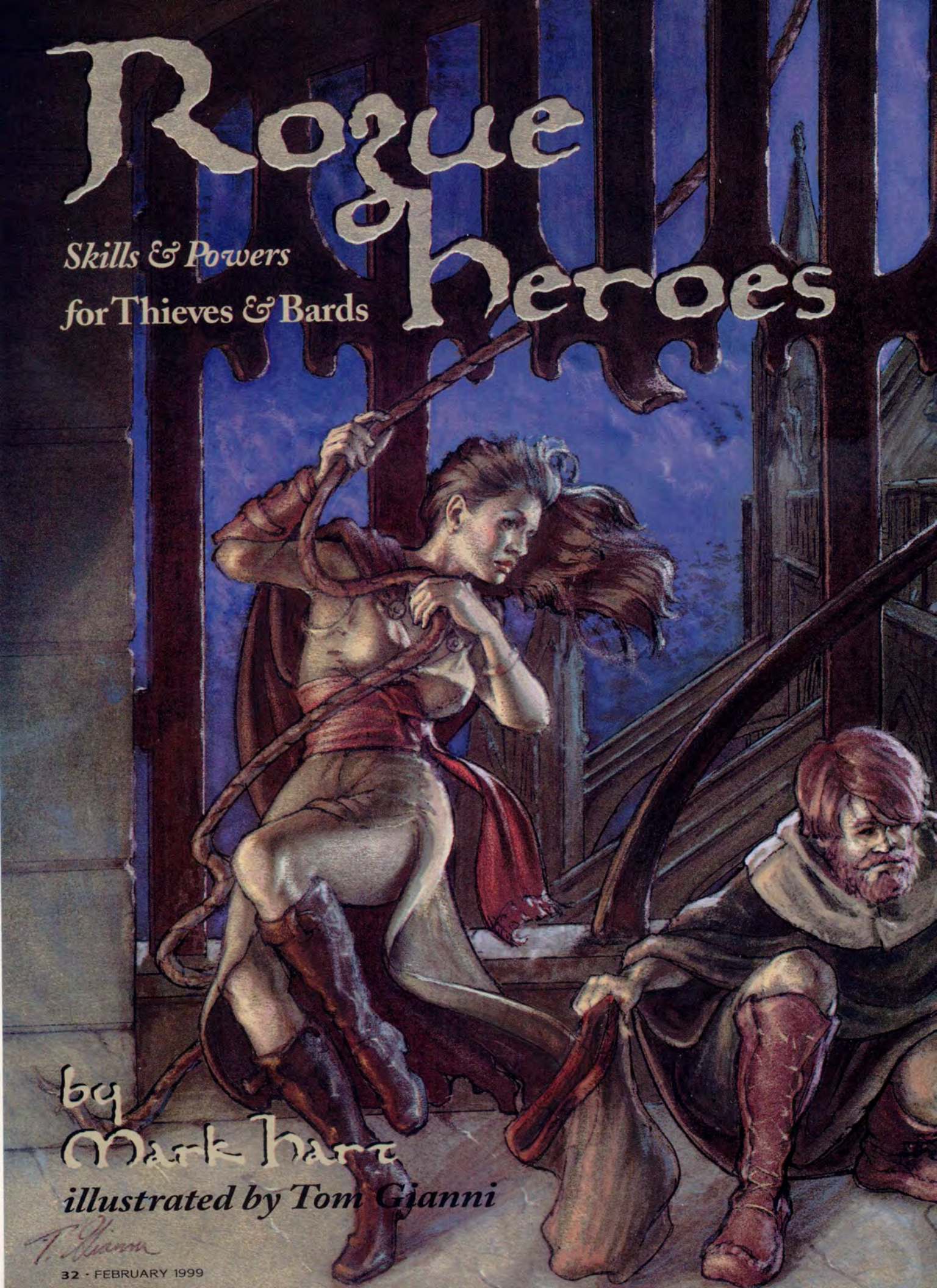
Rogue Heroes

Skills & Powers for Thieves & Bards



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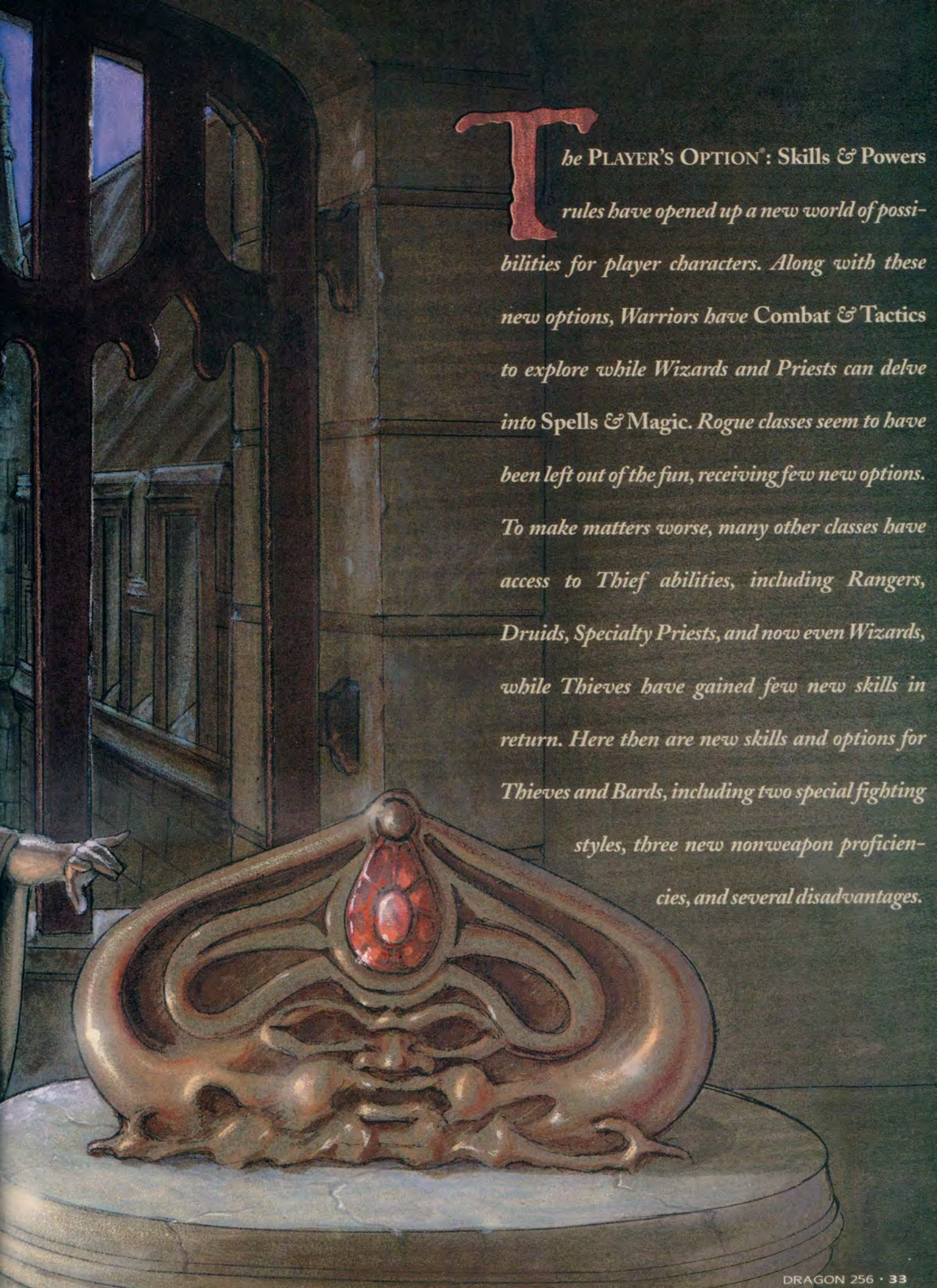


The PLAYER'S OPTION®: Skills & Powers *rules have opened up a new world of possibilities for player characters. Along with these new options, Warriors have* Combat & Tactics *to explore while Wizards and Priests can delve into* Spells & Magic. *Rogue classes seem to have been left out of the fun, receiving few new options. To make matters worse, many other classes have access to Thief abilities, including Rangers, Druids, Specialty Priests, and now even Wizards, while Thieves have gained few new skills in return. Here then are new skills and options for Thieves and Bards, including two special fighting styles, three new nonweapon proficiencies, and several disadvantages.*

Designing a Thief Character

The Thief is, in some ways, the most challenging PC class to roleplay.

Although Thieves have the lowest experience point per level requirements, they suffer from weak Hit Dice and poor combat abilities. Warriors can fight anywhere, while Wizards and Priests can cast spells at almost any time. Thief abilities are specialized, and the setting can limit their usefulness. A Thief in the woods, for example, rarely needs to Open Locks or Read Languages.

A Thief's skills and abilities should fit with the campaign, even more so than the other classes. If the campaign is primarily urban, a Thief's skills and talents should reflect the territory; a wilderness campaign demands a different set of skills. If a Thief's skills and abilities do not mesh with the campaign setting, he is of limited use to the party and a frustrating character to play. To design a Thief that fits in with a campaign, first decide what *kind* of Thief you want.

Thieves fall into into three broad categories: the *Adventuring Thief*, the *Urban Thief*, and the *Wilderness Thief*. Each type of Thief relies on a different set of skills and abilities—each suited to a different type of environment. These divisions can help you focus your character concept and select skills and powers appropriate for the campaign.

The Adventuring Thief is the "classic" dungeon-delving Rogue who adventures in ruins and castles; most Thieves fall into this category. The Adventuring Thief disarms the nasty traps that seem to litter every crypt and unlocks treasure chests found along the way. At the same time, the Adventuring Thief can also thrive in a town or city, where his skills have other applications. He can also function in the wilderness to a limited degree. Nonetheless, he would rather spend his time looting ancient tombs than forging documents and bribing bureaucrats. Treasure and wealth motivate the Adventuring Thief, but a life of adventure and danger also excites him. He is the most foolhardy and daring representative of his class. Fritz Leiber's character, the Grey Mouser, who adventured both inside and outside Lankhmar, is an excellent example of an Adventuring Thief.

The Urban Thief focuses on skills such as Climb Walls, Move Silently, Hide in Shadows, and Detect Noise. An Urban Thief could be a pickpocket, a cat burglar, a thug, or a smuggler, to name a few. The more sophisticated Urban Thief focuses on "civilized" thievery and specializes in bribery, forgery, and swindling nobles and bureaucrats. Either way, the Urban Thief enjoys the excitement and variety of city life, and his primary focus is on profit. He would sooner eat rot grubs than crawl through cursed tombs and haunted castles. An Urban Thief usually belongs to the local thieves' guild, and he must work under a system of rules imposed by the guild. A percentage of all profits goes to the guild. Charles Dickens' character, the Artful Dodger, is a good example of an Urban Thief, as is Lord Seregil of Lynn Flewelling's Nightrunner series.

Finally, there is the Wilderness Thief. A Wilderness Thief is similar to a Ranger but without alignment restrictions and with less interest in talking to animals or protecting a bunch of trees. A Wilderness Thief explores wilderness areas and gathers information about ambushes, trails, and natural hazards. The Wilderness Thief specializes in Climb Walls (natural obstacles), Move Silently, Hide in Shadows, and either avoiding or planning ambushes. He cares nothing about the Pick Pockets or Open Locks skills, and he prefers the outdoors to the dank alleyways of the city. The Wilderness Thief may have an interest in profit, but it is a secondary consideration to his mission. This category can also include the typical brigand or outlaw. Robin Hood is a prime example of a Wilderness Thief.

When choosing a category for your Thief, understand that these are guidelines, not restrictions. A few of the Thief abilities can be used in many situations, and almost every Thief should consider possessing them. For example, the ability to Move Silently or Hide in Shadows works in the city, the dungeon, or outdoors. Also remember that Backstab works on any creature with a back.

Once you know what type of Thief you are designing, you are ready to select his skills and abilities. You can select from the options listed on pages 51–54 of the *Player's Option: Skills & Powers* book, as well as from the new options listed on **Table 1**. There are three lists of options, one for each type of Thief. Although a Thief of one type should pick the majority of his skills from the appropriate list, the options below are open to all thieves. You can alter many of the different powers to fit one category or another with a little work. For example, a Thief in any setting would prize the "Increased Hit Die" bonus (see below). At the DM's option, these skills and powers might be available to Bards, too.

The Adventuring Thief

Charm Resistance (2/5): The Thief is resistant to Enchantment/Charm magic. For 2 points, the character receives a +1 bonus to saving throws vs. Enchantment/Charm spells or spell-like effects. For 5 points, he receives +2 to his saving throws.

Curse Detection (10): Every adventuring Thief is aware of the horrible curses lurking in tombs and in long-lost magical items. A few Thieves have developed a sixth sense that allows them to discern a cursed item or place. If the Thief comes within 10 feet of a cursed item, location, or person, he has a 10% chance per level of sensing the baneful magic. For every point of Wisdom/Intuition over 13, the Thief adds +2% to his chance. The Thief does not know the details of a detected curse; he is only aware of its presence.

For example, Bregan the Bold discovers a silver necklace while looting a crypt. He is a 3rd-level Thief with a Wisdom/Intuition of 14, which gives him a 32% chance to detect curses. He senses the curse in the item just before he touches it. He leaves the necklace behind, uncertain whether it is a *necklace of strangulation* or something worse, but reluctant to investigate further.

History (10): The Thief has a 5% chance per level to identify the overall purpose, utility, and history of any magical item he discovers. The Thief does not need to touch the item, but he must be able to examine it closely. This skill is similar to the Bard ability of the same name.

Increased Hit Die (10/20): For 10 CPs, the Thief rolls 1d8

when rolling hit points. For 20 points, the Thief rolls 1d10.

Poison Resistance (2/5): The character has a natural resistance to nonmagical poisons. For 2 CPs, he receives a +1 bonus to his saving throws vs. nonmagical poisons. For 5 points, he receives a +2 bonus.

Scrounge (5): The Thief has an uncanny knack for finding just what he needs, when he needs it. Given time, the Thief can scrounge food, clothing, rope, spell components, or makeshift weapons in almost any setting. When the Thief scrounges for items of use (or a particular item), the DM decides if the item can be found in the area. If such an item is potentially available, the DM makes a Wisdom/Intuition check for the Thief. If the check fails, the Thief has spent a turn scrounging without result, although he may make one more attempt in that same area. If either the first or second Intuition check succeeds, the Thief has found what he needs. If both rolls fail, the Thief has spent 2 turns and found nothing of use. The Thief may make further attempts in a different area as needed. The DM may apply modifiers of anywhere from +2 to –2 based on the terrain and other factors—a crowded city (+2) is more likely to have items of interest than a barren desert (–2).

Unusual Luck (10): The Thief has exceptionally good luck. For 10 character points, he may make one reroll per game day. Only die rolls that directly affect the Thief may be rerolled. Thus saving throws, proficiency checks, and attack rolls can all be rerolled, but group initiative checks cannot. Use the best result of the two die rolls.

Table 1: New Skills & Powers

Ability	Cost
Animal Companion	5
Appearance Bonus	7
Bow Bonus	5/10
Called Shot Bonus	5
Catlike Grace	10
Charm Resistance	2/5
Criminal Connections	10
Combat Bonus	10/20
Curse Detection	10
Detect Lie	10
Evasion	10
Fascinate	5
Favors	5/10
Fighter Hit Point Bonus	5
Good Reputation	5
History	10
Inconspicuous	5
Increased Hit Die	10/20
Learning Bonus	5
Mentor	10
Missile Catch	10
Night Vision	5
Noble Title	5
Patron	7
Protective Wards	10/+5
Poison Resistance	2/5
Scrounge	5
Secret Identity	5
Unusual Luck	10

The Urban Thief

Appearance Bonus (7): The character gains a +1 bonus to his Charisma/Appearance score. His Appearance score can be up to five points higher than his Charisma/Leadership score, instead of the maximum of four points. The ability may not exceed 18 with this bonus.

Catlike Grace (10): The character has catlike grace. Because of his exceptional agility, the character gains an additional +5% to all Thief skills affected by Dexterity—Pick Pockets, Open Locks, Find/Remove Traps, Climb Walls, Hide in Shadows, Move Silently, Tunneling, and Escape Bonds.

Criminal Connections (10): The character is familiar with several established criminals in the region. These criminals know the character and have some respect for him. They might be willing to provide minor information or assistance, as long as the character does not ask too much and pays for what he gets. Criminal connections are limited to a small area, such as a city or large town. This advantage is lost if the character angers his connections (selling out a connection to the authorities, for example). The DM and the player must work out the specifics of the criminal connections so that the character knows what to expect. These connections might ask the character for information and assistance in return for their help. If the character fails to meet his end of the bargain, his connections refuse to help him ever again.

For example, Timeon the Gray knows the brigand lord Kirius and several of his men living in the Rogue Woods. The character can enter the woods and speak with the brigand lord without being robbed or attacked. If Timeon leads the local militia to the brigands, however, the relationship ends—probably on the point of a sword.

Favors (5/10): For 5 CPs, a minor noble, warlord, thieves' guild member, or city official owes the character a large favor. For 10 CPs, two different NPCs each owe the character a large favor. As long as the character maintains good relations with this person and does not abuse the relationship, he has his favor in reserve and can ask for small favors once in a while. The NPC fulfills reasonable requests. The favor may involve a loan, an audience with a local ruler, a short-term bodyguard, a small tract of land, rescue, revenge, etc. The DM and the player must work out the specifics of the favor and what might reasonably be granted. The favor is gone once used. If the person owing the favor dies, the advantage is lost. No one likes a large favor held over them for a long time, so the character should not wait too long before cashing in his favor.

Inconspicuous (5): The Thief has a face and voice that are almost immediately forgettable, and he has a personality to match. When in a crowd, he blends in and is ignored. People often walk by without noticing him. People who talk to the Thief find it difficult to remember any details of the encounter. Anyone trying to recall details about the Thief must make an Intelligence/Knowledge check at a –4 penalty, with an additional –1 penalty for every day that has passed since the

encounter. This special power is useful for spies and infiltrators, allowing them to move freely without attracting attention or being remembered afterward. Unfortunately, the Thief cannot turn this power on and off at will—he is always inconspicuous and easily ignored, which can be a disadvantage itself. Obviously, this is a poor choice for a Bard!

Noble Title (5): Rulers in need of cash have been known to sell noble titles to the highest bidder, or to give minor titles as rewards. A character with this advantage has a minor title of nobility, as does his immediate family. Most of these titles are nearly worthless but can still be used to an advantage. The noble patent grants the character an extra 2d3 × 10 gp of starting wealth during character creation. The character may be able to get a minor government job if needed, and other lesser nobles are more likely to accept him as a social equal. Unfortunately, the character might start the campaign with enemies among the nobles or peasants in the region who may be envious of the character's family. Nobles from other regions are unlikely to respect or acknowledge the character's "noble" birth and patent—many nobles consider the idea a crude joke at best. The title of "Lord" is the most common, holding little significance but nonetheless giving an air of authority.

Protective Wards (10/+5): The Thief has knowledge of a minor protective ward, one of several that Thieves use in their line of work. A protective ward is a combination of special words, phrases, and hand signals that have slight magical power. A ward can be used as often as necessary and has an initiative factor of "Fast." Use of a ward requires the Thief have his hands and mouth free. One ward costs 10 CP, while an additional ward costs 5 CP. The DM may want to create a few other minor wards for his campaign, similar in scope to the two described below.

Ill Luck Ward: This is perhaps the most common ward of all, used by Thieves everywhere just before they attempt something monumentally stupid or dangerous. First, the Thief announces he is attempting an action and performs the Ill Luck Ward. The DM must decide how harmful it would be if the Thief were to fail. If failure would cause grievous injury or death, the DM can allow the player to reroll the action.

For example, Arcanus the Mad is attempting to scale down a sheer cliff. Before doing so, he performs an Ill Luck Ward and asks for the blessings of Lady Luck. The DM determines that a fall from the top of the cliff would likely be fatal. Arcanus makes his Climb Walls roll and fails. The DM allows Arcanus to reroll. If the new roll succeeds, then Arcanus can scale the cliff. If the reroll fails, then he suffers a sudden sinking feeling. The Ill Luck Ward does not apply to combat situations such as "to hit" or damage rolls, but it does apply to saving throws. The DM has final say as to when the Ill Luck Ward helps and when it doesn't. Because the Thief doesn't know the risks and dangers involved in a given task, he never knows when the Ward will work and when it won't. Clever Thieves do not abuse or overuse this ward, knowing how quickly luck can run out on them. It is best used for unusual or exceptionally dangerous situations.

Guardian Ward: If a Thief comes across someone's guardian beast or spirit, this ward gives him a chance to escape his fate. When the Thief encounters such a guardian, he makes a quick hand gesture and utters a phrase. The creature or spirit must make a saving throw vs. petrification. If the save succeeds, the creature ignores the puny ward and can attack the Thief. If the creature fails its save, it stands motionless for 1 full round, unable to pursue the Thief. During that time, the Thief can either run (smart Thief) or attack (soon-to-be-dead Thief) without interference from the warded creature. The ward functions against creatures ranging from a mundane animal like a guard dog to a magical creature such as a golem or ghost. The ward does not work against creatures not specifically assigned to protect a location or item. For example, a stone golem assigned to guard a Wizard's treasury could be affected, while a free-roaming fire elemental could not be.

Wilderness Thief

Animal Companion (5): The Thief has a trained animal that accompanies him on scouting missions. The uses for the animal depend on the kind of animal selected. The best choices include a dog or a falcon, although the DM may allow more esoteric choices such as a badger, fox, or wolf. The animal companion may be trained to hunt small game for the party, as in the case of a falcon, or it may be trained to follow a scent or trail, as with a dog. The animal has been trained to obey several verbal commands. It is exceptionally clever but does not possess magical abilities or above animal Intelligence. There is no mystical bond between animal and master. The animal attacks on command, especially if its master is threatened. If the animal is killed or lost, the Thief can replace it within three to four weeks for 200–300 gp. If the Thief has the Animal Training NWP, he can train another animal companion on his own in the same amount of time, at half the cost.

Bow Bonus (5/10): A Thief with this ability gains a +1 bonus "to hit" when using a bow of any type. This bonus can be purchased two times, for a total attack bonus of +2.

Called Shot Bonus (5): The Thief gains a +2 bonus on all called shots. The bonus partially offsets the normal called shot penalties of –4 to –8 and applies to ranged or melee attacks.

Combat Bonus (10/20): A Thief with this ability is superior in combat to most Thieves. For 10 CPs, the Thief's THAC0 advances as if he were a Priest of equal level. For 20 CPs, the Thief's THAC0 advances as a Fighter's.

Fighter Hit Point Bonus (5): The Thief receives the benefits of a high Constitution score as if he were a Fighter, gaining bonus hit points for an ability score greater than 16.

Evasion (10): Evasion is a new Thief skill. With this skill, the Thief is adept at dodging attacks aimed at him. When purchased, the skill begins at a base score of 10%, modified by Dexterity. It can be improved through skill points, exactly like the other Thief skills, but only by five points per level. The Evasion skill can never exceed 60%, modified by Dexterity. The Thief receives a +2% bonus to his evasion score for every point of Dexterity over 14. Thus, a Thief with a Dexterity of 17 would have a bonus of +6%. Elves, gnomes, and halflings receive a +5% racial bonus.

Evasion allows the Thief to avoid one melee attack or one small area of effect attack (such as a *burning hands* spell or a flask of flaming oil) per round. For Evasion to work, the Thief cannot be surprised and must be aware of the incoming attack.

An attack from behind, for example, cannot be evaded. To use this skill, the Thief chooses which attack he is attempting to avoid. A Thief using the Evasion ability is unable to take any action other than movement that round.

Before any Evasion rolls, the DM makes the necessary attack roll. If the attack misses, the Thief does not roll for Evasion. If, however, the attack would normally hit, the player must roll his Evasion score or less on percentile dice. If the roll fails, the attack hits the Thief and normal damage applies. If the roll succeeds, however, the Thief has dodged out of harm's way and avoids the attack.

Larger area effect spells such as *fireball* cannot be avoided. Likewise, Evasion does not protect against nondamaging, area of effect spells such as *sleep*.

Mentor (10): The character has an old friend, trainer, or teacher with whom he maintains a strong relationship. When the character needs further training, advice, or just someone to talk to, he can approach his old friend for help. The mentor may also be willing to lend money, provide room and board, or even help fight against a truly terrible foe. The relationship must be reciprocal. The character should be respectful and courteous to his mentor, repaying the favors he receives in short order. The character should not become a nuisance or ask for help so often the mentor becomes a crutch. If the character abuses the relationship, betrays his mentor, steals from him, or breaks any ethical codes the mentor follows, the character loses the benefits of the relationship. The DM should design the mentor, providing both game statistics and personality for him. When the character has gained a few experience levels, the mentor may ask the character for help, providing for further adventures. The mentor does not become a full-time adventuring partner, but he might be willing to help against a foe that threatens the region (a dragon, for instance). The mentor can be of any level the DM desires, but 5th level is the minimum recommended. The mentor may be retired, or he may gain experience as his former pupil does, at the DM's option.

Night Vision (5): The Thief has excellent Night Vision, allowing him to operate in darkness with reduced penalties. With this ability, the Thief suffers no penalties in moonlight conditions. In starlight or similar lighting, the Thief suffers a –1 to saving throws, –1 to attack rolls, and –1 to his Armor Class. Under conditions near total darkness, the Thief suffers only –2 penalties to saving throws, combat rolls, and Armor Class. Although this ability has similarities to Blind-fighting, Night Vision applies to both combat and noncombat situations. Blind-fighting allows a character to "sense" where an opponent is, while Night Vision allows him to actually see where the enemy is. Night Vision provides no benefits if there is no light present, such as in a sealed room or magical darkness.

The Bard

While the Thief tends to be a specialist, the Bard is the jack-of-all-trades. Where the Thief thrives in anonymity, the Bard revels in popularity. The Bard dabbles in everything, including music, thievery, magic, and knowledge. The Bard class represents a "renaissance man" of sorts, someone interested in learning something about everything, yet becoming a master of none. The Bard is a "people person," and thus a good number of his abilities involve dealing with people and manipulating them as necessary.

When designing your Bard, you can select from the options listed on pages 54-56 of the *Skills & Powers* book. The Bard also has access to the skills and powers listed below. These are intended primarily for Bards. However, at the DM's option, PC Thieves may also choose from the list.

Detect Lie (10): A Bard learns to study people and is an excellent observer of the habits and nuances of body language and what they signify. He is adept at telling when someone is lying to him or being evasive. The Bard does not know the specifics of any falsehoods—he only knows if the speaker is lying to him. If the speaker is an exceptionally good liar or actor, the DM may secretly roll a Wisdom/Intuition check for the Bard. If the check fails, the Bard does not detect a lie or an evasion in a statement or answer. If, however, the check succeeds, the Bard can sense the speaker is lying. The DM may penalize the Intuition check if the speaker is a Rogue, unusually eloquent, or wary of what he says to the Bard. The Bard cannot verify the accuracy of what someone says, only if they are intentionally lying or not.

Fascinate (5): The Bard has a magnetic personality that fascinates people. His voice is hypnotic and his eyes are alluring. People meeting the Bard seem to like him instantly. When the Bard speaks or sings, people in the room fall silent to listen. When talking to a group of people, the Bard receives a –1 bonus to his reaction rolls, in addition to any other bonuses he might have. When talking to one or two people, he receives a –2 bonus to reaction rolls. Furthermore, if the reaction of the listeners is "Friendly" they act as if under the influence of a *suggestion* spell

for the next round. They do their best to do what the Bard asks, freely answering all his questions. As long as the Bard does not abuse his influence or ask for anything out of character from the listeners, they do not feel manipulated or tricked. Creatures of less than 5 Intelligence, undead, and animated or summoned monsters are immune to this power.

Good Reputation (5): The Bard has a popular reputation in the area, and people are familiar with his talents. The Bard's name has become common knowledge and his abilities are in demand. With his reputation, the Bard can travel from place to place, living off the goodwill his name generates. He can acquire free room and board, free drinks, and the occasional small gift. In game terms, the Bard gains a –2 bonus to reaction rolls after he mentions his name in conversation. If the reaction he receives is favorable, he can ask for free lodging, information, or food and expect to receive it. If the reaction is unfavorable, he first must prove his namesake by entertaining the disbelievers. After that, he may make another reaction check with a –4 bonus. Failure indicates the Bard's name is unfamiliar to the listeners or that they just aren't impressed. In exchange for the goodwill and gifts, people expect the Bard to entertain them wherever he goes, often for hours at a time. If the Bard refuses, it damages his reputation. If the Bard continually turns down requests to entertain, his reputation suffers permanent harm.

Learning Bonus (5): The Bard is adept at learning new things. This bonus allows him to purchase all NWPs at 1 point under normal cost (minimum 1 point). For example, the NWP Ancient History normally costs 3 points. For a Bard with Learning Bonus, the proficiency only costs 2 points. When learning languages, the Bard pays the full normal NWP cost, but receives two languages instead of one for the price.

Missile Catch (10): With Missile Catch, the Bard can attempt to catch missiles thrown or fired at him. The base chance of success is equal to the Bard's Dexterity/Aim score × 1%, plus an additional +2% per level. Thus, a 5th-level Bard with a Dexterity/Aim of 16 would have a 26% Missile Catch chance. To use this skill, the Bard must be aware of the incoming attack and have at least one hand free. Missile catching counts as an action but does not require an Initiative check. If the Bard is free to use this skill, he makes a percentile roll against any incoming missile attack. If he fails, the missile might hit him (assuming the attack roll succeeded). If he succeeds, he has caught the missile in his hand, sustaining no damage. The skill does not work against large missiles such as giant-hurled boulders or ballista bolts, nor does it work against missiles created by spells such as *magic missile* or *flame arrow.*

Patron (7): The Bard has a wealthy noble or merchant patron to support his creativity. The patron provides room and board and a small monthly stipend (10 gp a month) to the Bard as needed. The patron may also be willing to help defray other expenses, such as instrument repair or travel accommodations. In return for this generosity, the patron expects the Bard to entertain for him on a regular basis. The patron is quick to boast about "his" Bard to others, who also want to see the Bard perform. The DM should create the NPC patron, including any subplots that may affect the Bard during the campaign. If the Bard fails to please his patron, the patron cuts off all support. A vindictive patron may tarnish the Bard's reputation every chance he gets.

Secret Identity (5): The Bard has an alter ego that he maintains on a regular basis. The alter ego is likely to be quite different from the Bard's true personality; the alter ego is probably so different that no one would ever suspect they were the same person. The player decides the details of the Secret Identity, including race, gender, age, appearance, profession, and reputation. The alter ego is useful for escaping dangerous situations, spying on targets, gaining information, and infiltrating groups. When the Bard spends the 5 character points, it is assumed his alter ego has already been established in the area and is well known by several people. A good Secret Identity usually involves a favorite place (or two) where the Thief puts in a regular appearance, such as a tavern or an inn.

For example, Gareth of Briarsby is a popular Bard of some position, and he has a reputation to uphold. At the same time, Gareth also spies on the enemies of his patron, Baron Delgardis of Briarsby. Because Gareth is well known in the region, he relies on the persona of "Grifter" when spying. Grifter is a grizzled beggar who is hard of hearing and has a fondness for free ale. Folks know Gareth the minstrel by sight, but they usually ignore Grifter like a piece of dusty furniture in the corner—everyone knows he's "completely harmless."

Nonweapon Proficiencies

Rogues have always relied more on skill and information than brute strength or raw magical force, and nonweapon proficiencies are especially important to them. Any campaign with Thieves or Bards should strongly consider using the NWP rules. Without them, these characters are hampered and limited in comparison to Warriors, Wizards, and Priests. To provide a few more choices, three new nonweapon proficiencies are described below for Thieves and Bards.

Courtly Intrigue (Cost: 4, Initial Rating: 6, Ability: Wisdom/Intuition, Intelligence/Knowledge): A character with this proficiency is well versed in the intricacies of court life and the affairs of nobility. The character knows all the gossip, has heard all the rumors, and has a good idea of who does what and to whom. The character does not know the accuracy of the information—it is all hearsay. (If a character with this proficiency attempts to do something he shouldn't do in a court setting, the DM tells the player the *faux pas* his character is about to commit.) A proficiency check is required if a character wants to learn new information or uncover the latest rumor. Success means the character found out a few bits of information. Failure means either no information or wild rumors. Courtly Intrigue is especially useful when combined with the NWP Etiquette. A character with both proficiencies receives a +1 to the NWP scores of each.

Sleight of Hand (Cost: 3, Initial Rating: 6, Ability: Dexterity/Aim): This proficiency involves the art of legerdemain—tricking the eye and mind with the hand. The character can do simple hand tricks, including making small items vanish, pulling flowers from a sleeve, and so forth. A character may perform these simple tricks without a proficiency check. If the character wants to impress an audience with his skills, or if he is performing for a less than hospitable group, a proficiency

Table 2: New Proficiencies

Proficiency	Cost	Initial Rating	Ability
Courtly Intrigue	4	6	Wisdom/Intuition/Intelligence/Knowledge
Sleight of Hand	3	6	Dexterity/Aim
Streetwise	3	7	Wisdom/Intuition/Charisma/Leadership

check is required. Additionally, this proficiency adds +5% to the Thief's Pick Pockets score.

Streetwise (Cost: 3, Initial Rating: 7, Ability: Wisdom/Intuition, Charisma/ Leadership): A character with Streetwise can survive on the streets of any town or city. He quickly learns the good (and not so good) places to sleep and eat. He finds out about the dangerous alleys, the people to meet, and the people to avoid. Given a few hours on his own, the character can gain bits and pieces of gossip and rumors, some of which may even be true. Any time a character is in a new city or town, he must make a proficiency check to become streetwise, a process that usually takes two to three days. A proficiency check is required for a character to dig up a specific fact. If the character is of a different race from the populace (e.g., a dwarf in a human city), there is a –2 penalty to the proficiency checks.

Nonweapon Proficiency Packages

As an option, the DM may allow Rogue characters to purchase an NWP package. An NWP package is a bundle of related nonweapon proficiencies available at reduced cost. Each package costs 10 character points and follows the normal rules for the use of NWPs. Below are three sample packages, each with its own special theme.

For the Adventuring Thief: Ancient History, Blind-fighting, Rope Use, and Running.

For the spy or swindler: Courtly Intrigue, Cryptography, Disguise, and Forgery.

For the burglar or pickpocket: Appraising, Jumping, Running, and Streetwise.

For the Wilderness Thief: Fire-building, Hunting, Set Snares, Survival, and Weather Knowledge.

For the Bard: Ancient History, Etiquette, Musical Instrument, Singing, and Sleight of Hand.

The DM should create similar NWP packages for his campaign. A good package is built around a theme or basic concept, and all the skills within a package should have a logical reason for being included. The DM can design NWP packages for other classes and even for different races and cultures. For example, the DM could create an NWP package for the hill dwarves of the Grey Hills—dwarves well known for their skills in Engineering, Mining, Smithing, and the like.

Fighting Styles

Local fighting styles were introduced on pg. 78 of *Combat & Tactics*, and a few basic ideas were provided, but not many details. A fighting style is usually cultural in origin, designed to take advantage of the strengths of a typical member of that culture. For example, a mighty barbarian from the distant northlands would use a different fighting style than a wiry, city-bred Thief. The barbarian would rely on his strength and reach, while the Thief would rely on his accuracy and agility. Fighting styles add flavor and variety to combat and highlight the strengths and weaknesses of combatants. Fighting styles are especially attractive to Thieves and Bards, giving them some opportunity to survive combat against physically tougher foes.

What follows are two different fighting styles. The first style is designed for the urban Thief. The urban style utilizes a combination of speed, feints, and parries. It is aimed at allowing the Thief to strike quickly and escape while his enemies are hampered by confusion. The second style described is for the Wilderness or Adventuring Thief. This style is useful in fighting larger and tougher creatures. It is designed to locate a monster's weaknesses and exploit them with surprise attacks and quick strikes. These Thieves do not have the combat ability to fight against the bigger creatures, but this fighting style helps even the balance by replacing brute force with precision.

Urban Fighting Style: This style relies on speed and deceit and is interlaced with feints and special parries, with the idea of delaying the enemy while the Thief tries to escape. To purchase this combat style, a character must fulfill two prerequisites. First, he must have the Two Weapon Fighting Style proficiency. Second, the character must have both Rapier (or similar light fencing weapon) and Main Gauche (or similar parrying weapon) proficiencies.

If both of these requirements have been met, then the character can purchase this style for 5 CPs. The style provides several benefits, in addition to those already gained by the two prerequisites. The character gains a +1 bonus to his AC from one frontal melee attack per round. The character also gains a +2 bonus to all blocking attempts. If the Thief chooses to parry an attack (see pg. 27 of *Combat & Tactics*), he receives an AC bonus equal to one-half his level. Finally, the character may attempt to use feints to create an attack of opportunity against a foe.

To make a feint, a Dexterity/Balance check is required. If the check fails, then the character suffers a +2 penalty against his AC for the next attack—he has left himself exposed. If the Dexterity check succeeds, however, the feint has tricked the enemy, and the character makes an attack of opportunity in addition to his normal action for the round.

The benefits and advantages of this fighting style may be applied only if the character is fighting living opponents of at least animal intelligence or better. The bonuses depend on the character being able to read the body and eye movements of the foe. Undead and animated creatures do not give off such subtle clues, and mindless creatures are too stupid to fall for any tricks. If the character is disarmed in a fight, he cannot use the benefits of this package until the weapon is recovered.

Table 3: New Disadvantages

Disadvantage	CPs
Bad Reputation	5
Black Sheep of the Family	10
Branded	5
Dislike of Nobility	5
Family Curse	5/10
Fool With Money	8
Harbinger of Ill Omen	5
Hunted	10
Impious	7
Jealous Lover	5
Reaction Penalty	5
Reckless	5

If the character spends an additional 2 CPs on the urban fighting style, he receives a +2 bonus on all disarming and expert disarming attempts.

Wilderness Fighting Style: The wilderness is dangerous, and scouts often runs across orcs, ogres, and even giants in their travels. The intelligent Thief would never attack such creatures by himself. With help from allies, however, he can utilize this fighting style to help bring down the enemy. To purchase the Wilderness Fighting Style, the character must fulfill two prerequisites. First, he must be proficient in a melee weapon of medium to large size. Second, he must be have either the Single Weapon or Two Weapon Fighting Style proficiency.

When both prerequisites have been met, the character may purchase this style for 5 CPs. The wilderness style provides two benefits. First, it allows the character to make one attack of opportunity per round, but only if he can strike from behind or if an ally is fighting the creature at the same time. Basically, the Thief leaps in, makes his attack, and then gets out of the way before he can be attacked. If conditions are right, the Thief may Backstab with his attack of opportunity.

Second, the Thief can locate a vulnerability on a creature and strike that location for added damage. To locate a weak spot in a creature requires the Thief to spend a round studying the opponent without attacking. Then, a Wisdom/Intuition check is made. If the check fails, the Thief cannot locate a weakness. If the check succeeds, the Thief has found a vulnerability in the creature. Hitting the vulnerable spot requires a called shot with a –4 attack penalty. If a called shot hits a vulnerable location, the attack inflicts an additional 2 points of damage. The Thief can point out the vulnerability to his allies, who can then strike that location for the extra damage. The DM may rule that amorphous creatures (puddings, slimes, and so forth) do not have weak spots. He may also rule that extra-planar creatures do not have such weaknesses (elementals, for example).

Disadvantages

Disadvantages are useful for players and DMs. For players, disadvantages provide extra character points and give characters individuality and human interest. For DMs, disadvantages provide opportunities for plot twists and putting characters into challenging situations. **Table 3** lists new disadvantages open to Thieves and Bards. The DM might allow other character classes to choose from the list as well.

Bad Reputation (5): The character has a reputation that frightens or angers people. The mere mention of the character's name might inspire fear, hatred, or disgust in others, depending on the specific reputation. The character might have the reputation of being unlucky, petty, cruel, or anything that the player and DM agree on. The reputation may or may not be accurate, but word of the character's reputation always travels faster than the character. In game terms, the character with the bad reputation suffers a +2 penalty to all reaction rolls for first encounters. If the reaction result is "cautious" or worse (see the *DMG*), the NPCs react in a way that is appropriate to the character's reputation (e.g., fear, anger, etc.). A bad reputation often includes both the name and a description of the character, which might require the character to assume a false name and a disguise when traveling.

Black Sheep of the Family (5): The character is an outlaw to his house, and has been disowned by his family. The player and the DM should work out the reasons why this occurred and whether it is possible for the character to earn his way back into the fold (i.e., pay off the disadvantage). As a result, he cannot inherit anything from his family, and he cannot call on them for help or support. Earning forgiveness, if possible, is difficult and could take years of hard work. For 5 points, the character committed relatively minor offenses and should be able to make amends. The character may have lost a minor heirloom, married the wrong person, or failed to follow in the proper profession. If the character wants to increase the severity of this disadvantage, he should select Powerful Enemy (10 points) and indicate the enemy is his former family, who seek to punish the character in full for his misdeeds.

Branded (5): The character has fled his homeland for a crime and wears a prominent brand as part of his punishment. The character might have been a slave, a Thief, or an accused criminal. The brand cannot easily be covered up, and a cursory search reveals the brand to anyone. The brand is most likely on the character's forehead, cheek, forearm or hand (player's choice). Law enforcement agents who notice the brand attempt to arrest the character for extradition or imprisonment. The DM and player should work out the crime, the brand, and the circumstances surrounding the character's escape. The player may choose whether his character committed a crime or was falsely accused.

Dislike of Nobility (5): The character has a dim view of nobility. He considers nobles to be cowardly bullies, little more than thieves with power and wealth. As a result, the character has trouble trusting or following nobles of any kind. The character expects nobles to turn on him, steal from him, or just plain have him killed. Despite this dislike, the character does not necessarily make his displeasure known; along with a dislike of nobles comes fear of their power. In game terms, the player must make a Wisdom/Willpower check whenever a noble asks the character to do something. If the roll fails, the character does his best to ignore or botch the request. If the check succeeds, the character overcomes his distrust for the time being.

Family Curse (5/10): The character carries the family curse, which has been with his ancestors for generations. For 5 points, the curse is minor. A minor curse could involve small (–1) penal-

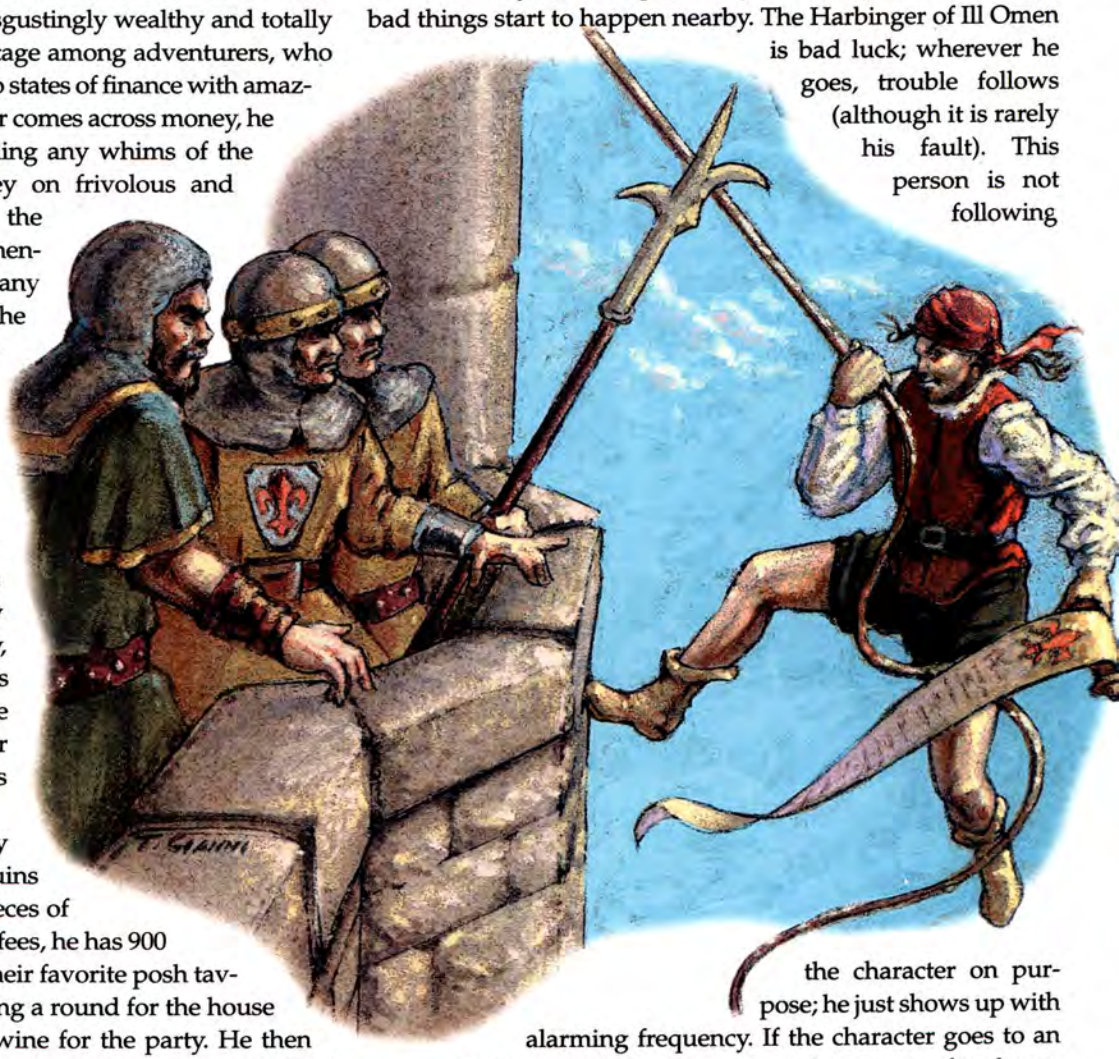
ties to a type of saving throw, a tendency to lose small objects, or a negative reaction from animals. For 10 points, the curse is severe and could become life-threatening in time. A severe curse might impose penalties of –3 or –4 to specific types of saving throws (petrification, for example). A severe curse could be more abstract. For example, anyone the character loves is destined to die, or perhaps the character suffers from a wound that does not heal. With either a minor or severe curse, removal of the malison requires a difficult, dangerous quest or pilgrimage, one not undertaken lightly (else the family would have already rid itself of the curse). A simple *remove curse* spell is not sufficient. The DM and player should work out the details of the curse. Whom did the family offend, when did it happen, and what is necessary to end the curse? What penalties does the curse impose? A family curse should not cripple the player character with penalties, but it should make life difficult at specific times or under certain conditions.

Fool With Money (8): The character is an adventurer at heart and alternates between being disgustingly wealthy and totally broke. This is a classic disadvantage among adventurers, who seem to alternate between the two states of finance with amazing frequency. When the character comes across money, he spends most of it quickly, fulfilling any whims of the moment. He spends his money on frivolous and extravagant things, and then the money is gone. In game terms, whenever the character acquires any amount of wealth over 100 gp, he must spend it as soon as possible. (If he is adventuring in the ruins of a castle, he must wait until he returns to town for his spending spree.) The character may not put the money in savings, and he may not give the money to his fellow adventurers or friends (he can, however, buy them gifts). He can give to charity, buy things for himself and friends (not all of his purchases should be utilitarian or useful), gamble, or do anything else that spends money creatively.

For example, Rolf the Mighty has just come back from the ruins with almost a thousand gold pieces of treasure. After paying taxes and fees, he has 900 gold left. He takes the party to their favorite posh tavern where he spends 75 gp buying a round for the house and a bottle of special Aelfain wine for the party. He then orders the seven course dinner for himself (another 5 gp). That night, he sleeps in the best room in the establishment, relishing room service and a soft bed (another 5 gp). The next morning, Rolf goes on a shopping spree: he buys his girlfriend a silver necklace (100 gp). Next, he buys a handsome new pair of leather boots (10 gp) and picks up a fancy walking staff with a carved wolf's head (just because he likes how it looks, a mere 20 gp). He also buys a pouch of his favorite tabac (an expensive brand, imported, a paltry 15 gp). He decides his old chainmail armor is too worn out and instead of simply repairing it opts for a whole new suit. He has it tailor-made by the best dwarven armorer in Highwall city. By the end of the week, Rolf has only 56 gp to his name. He promptly moves back to his favorite cheap inn (back to sleeping in the common room). He must now drink the watered ale and eat the plain meals served there. After Rolf's next burst of wealth, he will do it all over again!

The character can buy things he needs and can spend some of his wealth on equipment—but not all of it. It is best if the player adheres to the spirit of the disadvantage, not the letter, to make things entertaining. If the player is not following the spirit of the disadvantage, the DM may intervene to encourage the character to spend like an idiot for a while.

Harbinger of Ill Omen (5): The character seems cursed to forever bump into a specific person, time and time again. This person may be a greedy merchant, a blind seer, or a grizzled, old mercenary, for example. Every time this person shows up, bad things start to happen nearby. The Harbinger of Ill Omen is bad luck; wherever he goes, trouble follows (although it is rarely his fault). This person is not following the character on purpose; he just shows up with alarming frequency. If the character goes to an inn for the night, this person shows up a few hours later, or was there before the character arrived. If the character lands in jail, guess who is in the cell next door? This person is not trying to annoy or bother the character. He may find the circumstances just as annoying as the character does. The DM must create the NPC who "haunts" the character, making him eccentric enough to be annoying yet interesting and sporadically useful to the party. He does not go on adventures, but his



appearance is often a prelude to new ones. As the continuing wave of bad luck and weirdness follow this person, others might start to blame the character for the adversity. The DM can use this person for plot devices, adventure hooks, foreshadowing, and the occasional red herring. The harbinger should escape most adversity unscathed, although people might assume he has been killed from time to time ("no one could have survived that fire!"). If someone manages to kill the person, the DM should create a new harbinger for the character. If the PC kills the harbinger, the next one should make his life miserable.

Hunted (10): The character has been accused of a crime (falsely or otherwise) and is being hunted by the authorities. The character might have fled before sentencing, or escaped after being imprisoned. The crime is important enough (politically, religiously, or otherwise) that the character can expect to be hunted down and captured if he is not clever and cautious. The hunters are organized and determined, and they use magic and other resources to locate the character. It takes time for the pursuers to catch up, so the DM might want to spring this as a surprise after the player has forgotten about this disadvantage. The hunters should be more powerful than the character (but not overwhelmingly so) and organized. The DM and the player must work out the details of the crime and those hunting the character. This disadvantage may be combined with a branding (see above) for greater effect.

Impious (7): Gods and religions do not interest the character, and he only pays lip service to them. The character swears oaths he should not, blasphemes without caring, and is disrespectful to Priests and devout worshippers. He considers organized religion foolish or dangerous, and he makes no attempt to hide his feelings. A character who is impious does not seek clerical healing or assistance. To make matters worse, determined missionaries and vengeful Priests might doggedly pursue the character in hopes of converting such a "lost" individual. The character knows that gods exist, but he has no time to waste on them—the gods are uncaring of the troubles of mortals. In most kingdoms, people see the character as a heretic, blasphemer, or simply mad. The character may "buy off" this disadvantage after seeing for himself how gods and religion can benefit mortals; battlefield conversions have also been known to occur.

Jealous Lover (5): This is similar to Powerful Enemy, but with less deadly connotations. The character has left behind a jilted lover or former spouse. The old flame is now seeking the character—either to win him/her back or gain revenge. The lover is unusually persistent and exceptionally talented at pursuing the character and should have an annoying habit of turning up at the worst times in the worst places.

Reaction Penalty (5): The character rubs people the wrong way when he first meets them. People naturally distrust and dislike the character, often without obvious reason. A character with this disadvantage suffers a –2 reaction penalty on a first encounter, along with any other penalties that might apply for low Charisma/Appearance. After people get to know the character, the reaction penalty is only –1.

Reckless (5): The character takes unusual risks, often just for effect or to make an entrance. Why attack the monster when you can swing from a tapestry and land on top of him? Why simply leap the chasm when you can do it with a mid-air somersault? The character does not purposefully risk the lives of others, but his actions are performed with theatrics when possible. If there is more than one way of accomplishing a task, the Reckless character always takes the hardest path.

Luck Points for Rogues

Warriors depend on brute force, Wizards call upon arcane magic, while Priests have faith in their deities. Rogues, however, must rely on charm, wits, agility, and luck. When charm and wits fail, the Rogue turns to agility. When all three fail, however, he must fall back on luck to save his skin. Because luck is so important to Rogues, and because it is a major part of their profession, the option of Luck Points should be considered.

Luck Points are similar to character points, except the Thief gains only 1 point every experience level. Characters may not purchase NWPs and abilities with Luck Points; they can only be used for die rerolls and bonuses to die rolls. Luck Points may be used to alter any die roll that the Thief player makes, including attack rolls, saving throws, and initiative rolls.

If the player fails a die roll and has Luck Points remaining, he may ask the DM for a reroll. If the DM grants permission, the player rerolls the die. If the die roll still fails, the Luck Point is not used. If the die roll succeeds, then the point is used and is gone forever. As an alternative, the player can spend a Luck Point for a +2 bonus (+10% for percentile) on any die roll. Again, once the point is used it is gone. Only one point can be used at a time; the character cannot use two Luck Points for a +4 bonus. Luck Points cannot be used to affect someone else's die rolls.

The DM may, at his option, give Luck Points to reward players for exceptional roleplaying or brilliant planning. Such awards should be uncommon, and never more than a point per adventure. A Rogue tends to burn through his luck at an alarming rate, so the occasional award of a Luck Point helps increase survivability and encourages more imaginative roleplaying.

Other Resources

If you have access to other AD&D® material, there are several options available to Thieves and Bards. In *Combat & Tactics*, for example, Rogues may purchase several of the special talents listed on pages 78–80, including such useful things as Trouble Sense and Quickness. There are numerous NWPs available to Rogues, but they are scattered through several sourcebooks. The *Complete Thief's Handbook*, the *Complete Bard's Handbook*, and (if your DM is feeling generous) the *Complete Ninja's Handbook* all have proficiencies useful to Thieves. Finally, when your Thief reaches higher levels, there are several useful skills and powers detailed in the *High Level Campaigns* book.

Mark lives in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where his gaming group keeps him both inspired and insane. He has a soft spot for Rogue characters, and he hopes to inspire great mischief and mayhem on other worlds.

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The notion that secret societies composed of men of the highest intelligence and desirous of promoting some need, regardless of the laws, and reserving the right to use for themselves their discoveries at the right moment, or else covet this information until it suits their own purposes, all the while keeping their organization completely hidden from the common man, is inconceivable.

Therefore, it is probably true.

—From The History of the Flanaess by Archmage Humphrey the White of Beachcourt—583 CY

Hidden Agendas

by Andy Miller

illustrated by Scott Rosema

Secret societies appear in several AD&D® campaign worlds. The RAVENLOFT® setting has its various brotherhoods, the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting has many sects and cults (including the famous Harpers), the PLANESCAPE® setting has its factions, and the MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH™ setting has its qabals. The GREYHAWK® setting's Oerth also has several organizations, though none of them are as powerful or far reaching as those of Faerûn or Sigil.

Some of these organizations, like the Azure Masks or the Keepers, can help Player Characters (PCs) in the long run, providing them with information or tools otherwise unavailable—though always receiving their own benefits from the PCs in return. Some might ask for the PCs' help in resolving situations, though if the characters are not members, they will probably not even learn of the society's existence.

Secret societies can make good foils for PCs. If they find themselves up against a few different organizations, PCs might easily mistake similarities between various societies as signs that a single, super-secret organization is opposing them. While some PCs might despair of dealing with such a large and seemingly organized conspiracy, others rise to the challenge.

The societies can also be organizations to which the PCs belong, bodies that make them feel they are part of something important and larger than themselves. A mage who discovers a long-lost spell or magical item might find himself approached by agents of the Society of the Serpent. A Warrior who often fights evil Wizards might hear of the Fratern Milblinnis and decide to join. Any group that continually combats evil might be hired by the Keepers. Alternatively, a PC might be part of an organization to begin with, adding to his history and goals.

Society of the Serpent

The sole purpose of the Society of the Serpent is the acquisition and safekeeping of magical knowledge, particularly that of ancient and lost cultures such as the Suloise, Baklunish Empire, Blackmoor, or even older, forgotten civilizations. To this end, the society seeks magical items, especially looking for those that are unique or of great power (such as artifacts), and those spells and formulae that have been lost to the general populace of Wizards for centuries. The society is also a place where mages of all kinds can associate safely, regardless of race, creed, or alignment.

The ultimate goal of the society is to establish itself as a secret power across the Flanaess, a power that can manipulate the world for its own good. It seeks to protect the ignorant or unwise from uncontrolled power while simultaneously making power available to the Society at large. Members go to almost any lengths to keep the society secret and protect the magical information it collects, sometimes even confiscating powerful items from those they deem unworthy.

History. New members are told that the Society of the Serpent was originally founded in the Suel Empire around 1500 Suloise Dating, some 4,600 years ago. The organization held great power among the Suloise and established itself, once the Baklunish and Suloise met, as a neutral place where any mages could gather. It is recorded that the society spread to the Flanaess centuries before even Suel migrations were common.

In truth, the society is not as old as it claims. It was actually founded a little over 1,200 years ago by the half-Suloise, half-Flan archmage Krritarius, a Mage of the empire who traveled extensively in the Flanaess. In his travels, he stumbled upon the symbol of Keraptis (in the Rakers) and was intrigued by it. When he created the Society of the Serpent in 4840 SD after returning to the Suel Empire, he researched the serpent motif and used it as a symbol of the society. Later, it was claimed that Keraptis (and even later Acererak) had been members of the society. What, if any, actual connection there was between Keraptis and Acererak remains unknown.

The Rain of Colorless Fire that destroyed the Suel Empire might have rung a death knoll for the Society. Its main headquarters were destroyed along with the rest of the Imperium; however, though the Society faltered and was sorely hurt, it did not fall. Those few members in the east kept up the work of the organization, rebuilding after the devastation and recovering as best they could. Most of their knowledge, however, was lost.

With the fall of the Suel Empire and the chaos that followed, the common folks' view of magic changed. Though great Mages had ruled in the Empire, they had also brought down ruin on the people. Magic was as much feared as revered in the aftermath of the destruction, and surviving members of the Society saw this and were afraid. The organization completely withdrew from the common man, hiding both its power and its deep well of information. It remains hidden to this day.

Society of the Serpent

The sole purpose of the Society of the Serpent is the acquisition and safekeeping of magical knowledge.

History Founded 4,600 years ago (rumor)

Members Mages (any alignment, any race)

Recognition Distinctive signature or seal

Headquarters Cloud Citadel

Interactions With Other Societies Knows of the Azure Masks, Crescent League and Keepers

Members. A mage of any alignment may join the Society of the Serpent. Membership is by invitation only, which usually comes after a Wizard has recovered some powerful magical item, spell, or knowledge that has been long lost. Some mages who develop new and powerful spells are also asked to join the society, but this is rare. The organization has many ears; even if the potential member does not advertise his new knowledge, the Society hears of it. Membership is voluntary, though those who hoard knowledge or don't preserve it correctly are not looked upon kindly.

The Society does not consider good or evil as a motivating force, remaining neutral in its belief that knowledge is all important and should be available to everyone—at least everyone who's a member. It gives mages a place to meet regardless of alignment, acting as a neutral ground where discussions and debates on the nature of magic can take place. No members are allowed to combat each other in any of the holds of the Society or for twenty-four hours after leaving the sanctity of such a place. (According to the Society, mages should be above fighting anyway.) Lawful Good members are rare, as few can overlook the evil deeds of another without doing something about it. Likewise, Chaotic Evil mages are seldom members, as they are unpredictable and untrustworthy.

Members are required to make any new or lost magic they find available to the Society. They might also be assigned the job of "recovering" magic or even lost technology from the "wrong people." Any powerful magic the society considers misused by its owner might be "confiscated" in such a way.

Advantages. The Society has several secret libraries and laboratories set up across the Flanaess, some in the most unlikely locations. These are usually large and may be used by any member who knows of their existence. The Society also has access to many ancient texts and maps showing the location of dozens of abandoned (former member) Wizard's laboratories and strongholds, some of them in the Sea of Dust or Dry Steppes. The Society also knows the supposed locations of several artifacts. This information is occasionally made available to certain members. However, different cells and strongholds all have different information (a result of trying to keep from losing everything again should one stronghold fall, such as the Tower of Art during the Rain of Colorless Fire). Most strongholds, if they don't have the information, can guide their members to the cell in which the information can be found.

Any stronghold of the Society has a 10–40% chance (rolled randomly or determined by the DM) of having the information a PC requests. The sage rules from the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide* or *Sages and Specialists* should be consulted to determine whether the information is present with the following modifications: in the Society, frequency of such learned scholars is double that of Table 61 of the *DMG* (and even if such a sage is unavailable, those at the stronghold have an equal chance of knowing where one can be found), and the time required by such a sage is halved. If the DM determines that the information is available but that no sage of the appropriate type is present, the PC can conduct his own research, although research time is tripled. While holds of the Society always have quarters for visiting members, companions are not allowed to enter the place. Society sages charge standard fees for locating information.

The Society also serves as a place where magical spells can be researched or preserved. Having survived for over 1,200 years, the organization has access to many common spells (all those in the *Player's Handbook* and *Tome of Magic*, as well as many from the *Wizard's Spell Compendium*), arcane formulae for the making of potions and magical items, and even texts with individual or unique spells found nowhere else. This magic is

dispensed on a need-to-know basis and usually requires the mage requesting the information to give a spell or magical item of equal value to the Society.

Any mage who joins the society can learn the Spellcraft proficiency without cost (following a six-week training session) after joining the society. If the mage already has that skill, he may choose a special one-time free nonweapon proficiency from the list of Wizard proficiencies in the *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Spells & Magic* book.

Disadvantages. The society is considered evil by commoners. Since the reported reappearance of Keraptis in 576 CY and the unearthing of part of Acererak's horrible tomb, some little information about the Society has come to light. Those common folk who have heard stories about the organization react negatively to members, who incur a +3 penalty to their reaction check when dealing with someone they suspect is connected to the unknown organization.

Members of the Society are also expected to hand over any new magical items or spells they locate as soon as possible, at least long enough for the organization to copy or carefully examine the find. If the nearest cell is some distance, this could be a problem for the mage involved. Disregarding this rule or hoarding unique magic is severely punished by the society, usually by stripping the offender of all of his spellbooks and magical items, once the errant mage is tracked down.

Recognition. Members of the Society are allowed to encircle and add stylized entwining snakes to their own personal symbol or first initial. This serves as proof of membership in the organization, and many members keep some form of this symbol on their person, usually in the form of an amulet or ring that can double as a wax seal. Individuals who use the symbol without admission into the Society invariably disappear or die mysteriously (and sometimes horribly).

Headquarters. Though the Society has hidden cells, libraries, and laboratories across the Flanaess, its main base is in a cloud citadel floating through the skies of Oerth, never in the same place twice. The organization lost much in the Rain of Colorless Fire and refuses to risk being trapped in one place ever again. Less than one hundred years after the destruction, several dozen wizards pooled their powers to create a castle not unlike those used by cloud giants. The place was set adrift, though its navigation is strictly controlled, and it now goes wherever the Archmage of the Snake wishes, usually staying over unclaimed lands, mountains, or oceans. It is most commonly encountered over disorganized lands (such as former Geoff or Sterich) or far out to sea. Only rarely are PC members of the society allowed to enter, see, or even hear of the Cloud Citadel.

Interaction With Other Societies. The Society of the Serpent has little association with other secret societies. The group knows of the Azure Masks, and the Society's fear that the Masks have similar goals has made the two rivals. The Society has no formal ties with the Crescent League or the Keepers, but it has worked with both for its own reasons. The Society does not yet know of the Fratern Milblinnis (as of late 591 CY) but if (or more accurately when) it does, it would surely turn all of its power to destroying that group.

Crescent League

The Crescent League was created to make money for the common warrior and promote the crafts of strategy and tactics. The League claims that the warriors it trains lead the way for mercenary organizations—or, at least, it did.

The true purpose of the League is much more sinister (see below).

History. The League as known by most members and the general populace was established in 514 CY in one of the Ulek states by refugees from the Pomarj. Aggressive recruiting soon filled the ranks with those who wanted to be the best at warcraft, and members were soon seen all over the Flanaess, working alone or in small groups, usually in charge of regular soldiers.

That changed with the invasion of the Wild Coast by the Pomarj, specifically the city of Fax in 584 CY. The city had employed a force of forty members of the League under the command of a Major Estabon Voshente. When word reached Fax of the approaching orc horde, the government (a council of thirteen merchant lords) began an immediate evacuation. During the embarkation, Crescent League members in the city rushed a large galley, hijacking it, its crew, and those citizens already aboard. The ship fled east into the lands of Onnwal, which later fell to the Scarlet Brotherhood. Voshente was assassinated sometime after and replaced by one Colonel Quinn. Those citizens who were on the ship were never heard from again. It is assumed they were sold into slavery or worse.

Within a year, word had spread about the League's evil deed. With it came the rumors of the League's connection to the Scarlet Brotherhood. Throughout the Flanaess, the League's members were ejected from their posts. The League was disgraced and distrusted. Many members fled to Scant (further connecting the League with the Scarlet Brotherhood), while others went into hiding.

The true background of the League is only slightly different from its appearance. In actuality, it was formed by the

Crescent League

The Crescent League promotes the crafts of strategy and tactics.

History Established in 514 CY

Members Humans only of any class (LN)

Recognition Distinctive tattoo; hand signals

Headquarters City of Scant

Interactions With Other Societies High ranking members know of the Scarlet Brotherhood and the Keepers

Scarlet Brotherhood in one of its first major plans for conquering the Flanaess. Long before the Brotherhood's existence was known, the League was created to infiltrate and gain important positions in major strongholds in anticipation of the Brotherhood's eventual bid for power. After Major Voshente's blunder in Fax, the League is now almost useless to the Brotherhood and has been all but abandoned by it.

Members. The Crescent League is open to humans only, preferably those of pure Suloise or Suloise-related descent. All others are banned, though the League takes members of any class. Recruits are usually chosen from those of Lawful Neutral alignment, though some are Lawful Evil, True Neutral, or Neutral Evil.

The League is divided into officers and enlisted men. The highest ranking officers (Major and above) know of the League's now tenuous connection with the Scarlet Brotherhood. All others, including the lesser ranking officers, are kept as ignorant as possible about the Brotherhood's involvement. Only those thought capable of keeping the secret (and deemed pure enough) reach a rank of higher than Captain, and even then only after distinguished service. Most never gain ranks higher than enlisted.

Many members of the league now fight solely for survival and remember fondly the prestige their society once held. The higher ranking officers (especially Colonel Quinn) seek a way back into the Scarlet Brotherhood's good graces and send members on missions designed to promote this goal.

Advantages. Anyone entering the Crescent League is taught Tactics (which works much like a War Wizard's strategy ability from the *Complete Book of Elves*). This proficiency is based on Intelligence (no modifier) and would normally cost two slots. The ability allows anyone on the member's side of a battle to add a noncumulative +1 bonus to all attack rolls for the duration of that battle, providing all of the following conditions are met: 1) the League member can survey the area and map it; 2) the member holds a strategy meeting with all who gain the +1 bonus; and 3) all on the member's side who are to gain the bonus make a successful Intelligence check (including the League member). Those who fail do not receive the bonus, and if the League member who made the plan fails his Intelligence check, no one receives the bonus (i.e., the plan was flawed).

Due to the rigorous training all League recruits receive, each also gains a free weapon proficiency. If the PC joining is a non-Fighter (especially a Mage), he may receive training in any weapon a Fighter can use for the cost of only one slot.

Disadvantages. Members of the Crescent League are on duty at all times. Those members of the organization who are still in good standing are always on some kind of military mission. Worse, the Scarlet Brotherhood has access to all of the League's records and often clandestinely calls upon members to perform hazardous or even suicidal missions, usually without the members themselves knowing who they're working for or the specifics of the mission.

Members of the Crescent League are distrusted throughout the Flanaess by all but the most evil people. Being recognized as a member of the League by a Good-aligned person or a law-abiding person of a good land incurs a +4 penalty to reaction checks. In addition, word quickly spreads that the PC is a member of the Crescent League, and the PC must prove himself to be considered anything but a traitor and murderer.

Recognition. Each Crescent League member has a red crescent tattooed on the back of his sword hand (points facing the wrist). As the symbol is commonly known after the Fax debacle, many have burned or cut their hands to disguise or destroy the tattoo. Since the tattoo is no longer a safe or convenient way of identifying other members of the League, a new recognition code has been established. If a member sees another he thinks is of the League, he makes the shape of a crescent on his cheek with his index finger while cradling his chin in his open hand. The one signaled must reply in kind.

Those members of the League in Scant continue to wear red cloaks. Outside of that city, the red cloaks are never worn, as they are a sign that the wearer might be a member of the League.

Headquarters. The city of Scant, in Onnwal, is now the only major center of the League and has been turned into an armed camp. About three-hundred members of the League live there (a little over half their number in the Flanaess), lording over those few citizens who still live in abject poverty and slavery in the walled city. The group is commanded by Colonel Quinn, and this portion of the League still sells its services to whoever can pay, often taking on assignments for the Scarlet Brotherhood.

Interactions With Other Societies. The Crescent League has no inkling of the existence of the Society of the Serpent or the Fratern Milblinnis. The high ranking members of the League who know of the definite connection to the Scarlet Brotherhood know also about the Keepers, and they often try to learn what they can of that group's plans to foil them if possible. The league knows nothing of the Azure Masks, though the Masks have their own spies within the League's ranks (see below).

Fratern Milblinnis

The Fratern Milblinnis, or "Brotherhood of Mage's Blood" in the Cold Tongue, has two major goals as an organization: destroy all magical items not useful to the Brotherhood and kill all Mages, especially those who use magic to trick and confuse. The latter duties also include Clerics of deceitful gods (such as Syrul or especially Iuz).

History. This brotherhood is young, established in 584 CY when it was revealed to some in the barbarian states that Vatun was actually Iuz in disguise. The discovery was kept a secret for fear that it would destroy the spirit of the northmen to know that they'd been tricked. The Brotherhood was formed soon after to keep such a thing from ever happening again.

The irony of the situation is that if the secret were revealed, it would probably

unite the barbarian states once again in an effort to destroy the evil demigod, strengthening them as a nation and possibly forming yet another, stronger foil to Iuz's plans.

Members. Any but mages can enter the Fratern Milblinnis, though usually only barbarians or those from the barbarian states do so. Little is known about the society by the common man, though anyone who despises magic may be approached by members.

To join, an invited member must present a standing member with a magical item of permanent power and destroy it. The society favors the destruction of magical items only usable by Wizards, especially wands, staves, rods, *crystal balls*, or anything not useful to a Fighter and their like. Those members of the Wizard Slayer kit *(Complete Book of Barbarians)* are most welcome.

Advantages. Members of the Brotherhood gain a natural +2 on all saves vs. spells due to strong will, hatred of wizards, and a rough knowledge of magic. This is cumulative with any bonuses they have for high Wisdom or Dexterity. They can also learn the Spellcraft proficiency for only one slot. To combat the "evil" of magic more effectively, it is thought important to be knowledgeable of its workings.

Disadvantages. Though a member of the Fratern can use magical items allowed by their class (usually Warrior), he must do his utmost to destroy all other types of magic, especially those that are weird or perpetuate disguise or physical change. If a member allows a friend or companion to keep such an item, he receives no experience points until the society is abandoned or the situation rectified (i.e., by the destruction of the magical item). This need not be done publicly—stealing and secretly destroying such magic is acceptable (though not very honorable). A member who uses such magical items not only loses all of the advantages of membership but must also gain twice as many experience points to reach the next level (as if the character changed alignment) and is hunted by the society.

Those who destroy magic are rarely looked favorably upon outside the Fratern. Once a member's motivations and infamy grow, those who deal with magic always react unfavorably toward them. It is also easy to recognize members (once one learns of the society) by their habit of wearing broken magical items.

The Brotherhood has few safe houses or strongholds in the Flanaess and the organization is little help outside of its own stronghold in the hold of the Snow Barbarians. Once the Society of the Serpent learns of the group, it will probably begin bending its power toward the destruction of the organization.

Recognition. Members of the Brotherhood keep the broken bits of magical items they have destroyed about their person. Many turn them into necklaces, stringing the snapped wands or crushed rings on them. Others wear them as adornments or decorations on their armor, belts, or weapons.

When two members meet, one pantomimes breaking a stick in half. The return sign is to clutch both hands together.

Headquarters. The Brotherhood is not well spread out in the Flanaess due to its youth and radical teachings. However, it does have one key stronghold in the Corusk Mountains (hex G-21), some 45 miles due north of the city of Soull in the land of the Snow Barbarians. The castle sits on the side of a mountain, overlooking the valley and river below. Only a few members of the society know of its existence.

Interaction With Other Societies. The Fratern Milblinnis has no knowledge of the Society of the Serpent; if it did, it would doubtless make it a priority to destroy them. It knows of the Crescent League but, aside from despising it for its use of magic, doesn't think much of the group. It knows of neither the Keepers nor the Azure Masks, though this may soon change (see below).

Fratern Milblinnis

The Fratern Milblinnis, or "Brotherhood of Mage's Blood," has two major goals: destroy all magical items and kill all Mages.

History	Established in 584 CY
Membership	Any (except Mages), but generally Barbarians
Recognition	Distinctive jewelry; hand signals
Headquarters	Corusk Mountains
Interaction With Other Societies	Knows of the Crescent League

Telless ve Turu Decada

The Telless ve Turu Decada, "Keepers of the Crowns and Moon" in Velondi, is a society dedicated to halting the spread of evil throughout the land wherever and however possible.

History. The Tellessi (Keepers) were formed in 491 CY in the Kingdom of Furyondy to combat the growing might of Iuz to the north. The cambion had, by that time, complete control over the lands as far east as the Ritensa River, and pressure was felt by both the Shield Lands and Furyondy. The Tellessi originally began as a knightly order, independent of Furyondy and based in Wellborne Castle (hex F4-78) on the Veng River. The castle and seemingly the entire order were destroyed by the forces of Iuz in 500 CY. However, the society survived and went into hiding, fighting evil from its own shadow.

When Iuz vanished in 505 CY and his lands fell into turmoil, the Keepers found that they no longer had purpose. However, the lands north of Furyondy did not decline into petty fiefs, as many in Furyondy predicted but instead grew into the Horned Society. The order began to lean toward what it now represents: the eradication of evil from the land.

With the rise of Iuz again in the north, the society has been even more active with its plans.

Members. Any of Good alignment (and some of Lawful Neutral) are allowed to join the Keepers. Not widespread throughout the Flanaess, they often work alongside knights and even use adventurers to fulfill their plans, sending them to foil plots by evil groups or lands, or simply to harass and cause these groups to waste time and effort fighting against them. Members often find themselves in dangerous situations that could be fatal, but their promise to help protect the innocent comes first.

Advantages. All members of the Keepers learn to speak Velondi (an Old Oeridian tribal language mainly spoken by the rural folk of the Furyondy-Veluna borders), receiving this proficiency for free. As the language is not widespread and nothing like Common, members often speak in the tongue when in danger of being overheard. Most people consider the language a simple rural tongue, and this often aids the Keepers' disguise.

Members of the Keepers are also taught, in detail, about Iuz (the land and the demigod) and are considered proficient in Local History (Iuz) for free. What little is known about the lands of Iuz is drummed into each member's head on the off chance that they are sent into that horrible place.

The Tellessi have only a thin network throughout the Flanaess, though some of its members are highly placed in courts and the military. Not a large organization, the Keepers nevertheless have cells in further lands, some of which can even be found within evil states.

Disadvantages. Iuz knows of this society, though he is still not certain of its power or numbers. The demigod has a special hatred for the organization and sometimes goes out of his way to harry it. If anyone is ever publicly revealed as a member of the society, he soon finds his every step hounded by agents of Iuz. Those who are unintentionally revealed find some safety within the society, which does its best to shield, hide, or remove them from Iuz's reach, but those who actually reveal the organization's secrets are shunned.

This organization is always on duty. The Keepers have many plans and assignments to put the screws to evil countries. The group wants to put an end to the Scarlet Brotherhood, the Pomarj, the Bone March, and the evil remains of the Great Kingdom. Though the Keepers haven't the power to do so directly, they constantly try to harass them all.

The Keepers have a code of ethics similar to a Paladin's code. It is quite rigid and demanding, a result of the order's origins as a knighthood. Anyone who violates the code is dismissed, losing all contact with the society. This is an ongoing problem with Chaotic or Neutral Good members of the organization. The DM should set up a code of ethics that best reflects his or her campaign.

Recognition. Members of the Telless often wear symbols of Furyondy in some shape or form, most importantly the crowns and crescent moon. Many agents display them on rings, medallions, earrings, patches, and other accouterments, though never too obviously. A second signal is always required, usually a cryptic code sentence in Velondi remarking on something that has to do with darkness or the prevalence of shadows.

Headquarters. The Telless are thinly spread among the remaining good lands of the Flanaess, though cells of them may be found primarily in Furyondy, Veluna, and the Urnst states. Additionally, sleeper cells are often hidden in evil lands, waiting patiently until needed for the cause.

The Keepers have no central (or permanent) base of operations, though it is thought that the highest echelons of the organization work directly with Chendl.

Interaction With Other Societies. Though the Keepers of the Crowns and Moon know nothing of the Society of the Serpent, that organization has secretly aided them in the past. The Keepers have no formal ties with the Crescent League, though some of the higher-ranking members of the Keepers suspect the League's ties with the Scarlet Brotherhood. The Keepers have also recently learned of the Fratern Milblinnis and are even now planning on using that organization against Iuz. They know nothing of the Azure Masks.

Telless ve Turu Decada

The Telless ve Turu Decada is dedicated to halting the spread of evil.

History Formed in 491 CY

Members Any of Good alignment (some LN)

Recognition Distinctive jewelry; language

Headquarters No central headquarters

Interactions With Other Societies Knows of the Crescent League and Fratern Milblinnis

Azure Masks

This group of rogues and wandering minstrels strives to acquire all the information it can. Secrets are especially valuable, but any information that can be of value is also important. The only secret that must never be revealed is the organization's own existence.

The Masks often tell their recruits that they work for the city of Irongate (and the Iron League). These young men and women, who consider themselves on His Lord Mayor's Secret Service, soon find that the Azure Masks are in business only for themselves. Still, being in Irongate does give Cobb Darg and the city the protection of the Masks.

History. The Azure masks were formed around 70 CY in the Kingdom of Aerdi by the Overking Tenmeris. They

represent one of the few intelligent things he did as ruler. When he saw that bards and traveling performers were freely admitted into castles across his land, he hit upon the idea of using them as spies. The plan was his brainchild, and he never shared the secret with his advisors (or anyone else for that matter). When the Overking died in 75 CY, the organization suddenly found itself without a patron. Rather than reveal itself or dissolve, the Azure Masks broke with the Great Kingdom.

Since then the society has found success, hiring itself out (albeit quietly and never revealing to its customers exactly who or what it is) to various nations hungry for information about their neighbors. The society has flourished, especially during the Greyhawk Wars.

Members. Any performers can be members of the Azure Masks. The society takes just about anyone who can get up in front of people and entertain them. Bards, Thieves, jesters, actors, Wizards, and even Warriors are members. The Masks are careful about who they hire and what secrets they give out until sure of the new member. Many are sons or daughters of former Masks.

Members are sent to acquire specific or general information. If a member is sent to a castle, he is expected to leave the place knowing everything the residents don't want him to know. Sometimes missions take him into evil lands and dangerous places.

Advantages. All members are taught the trade of the performer and as a result may chose one nonweapon proficiency that has to do with performing. These can include Acting, Animal Training, Crowd Working *(Complete Bard's Handbook)*, Dancing, Juggling, Musical Instrument, Poetry, Singing, and Tumbling, among others. Members are encouraged to learn various spying skills as well.

The Masks are well organized, and usually members are equipped with items that make their job easier. The most common of these include almost any of the restricted items from the *Complete Thief's Handbook*. Other "special" equipment, including some magical items, is assigned or can be requisitioned from the local cell without cost. The items must be returned after the mission.

The organization has a great deal of information at its disposal. Though some is obsolete (nothing is ever discarded), there are still rooms and rooms full of nothing but raw data at the Chief Minstrel's disposal. Well catalogued, this archive forms the most comprehensive base of information in the Flanaess. All of it is available to members with a good reason for accessing the information.

Disadvantages. Members of the Azure Masks are often taught spying and entertaining to the detriment of other skills. Any member of the Masks must pay for any nonentertainment or nonspying proficiency (excepting combat skills) as if it were not in the Mask's class (i.e., at the cost of an extra proficiency slot). This applies to any proficiencies acquired after the PC joins the Masks.

The Masks disavow all knowledge of a member who is caught, and he is likewise expected to keep silent about the organization. (Those who might squeal are usually found dead in their cells.) Though the society does all in its power to free or save captured members, it does not jeopardize the organization or risk revealing its existence to do so.

Members of the Azure Masks are always on a mission. If they are going somewhere, it is at the society's wishes.

Recognition. Code phrases allow agents to recognize each other and are usually in jargon of the performer's trade, rarely understood by those outside the profession.

Headquarters. The main base of operations for the Azure Masks lies in Irongate. Cobb Darg knows of the group's existence. (They helped warn the Lord Mayor about the Scarlet Brotherhood's true motives during the Greyhawk Wars.) The Masks have two strongholds in the city: a large mansion where most of the information gathered by the group is stored and a renowned theater near the town center.

Azure Masks

This group strives to acquire information.

History Formed around 70 CY

Members Generally entertainers (any class)

Recognition Language; verbal codes

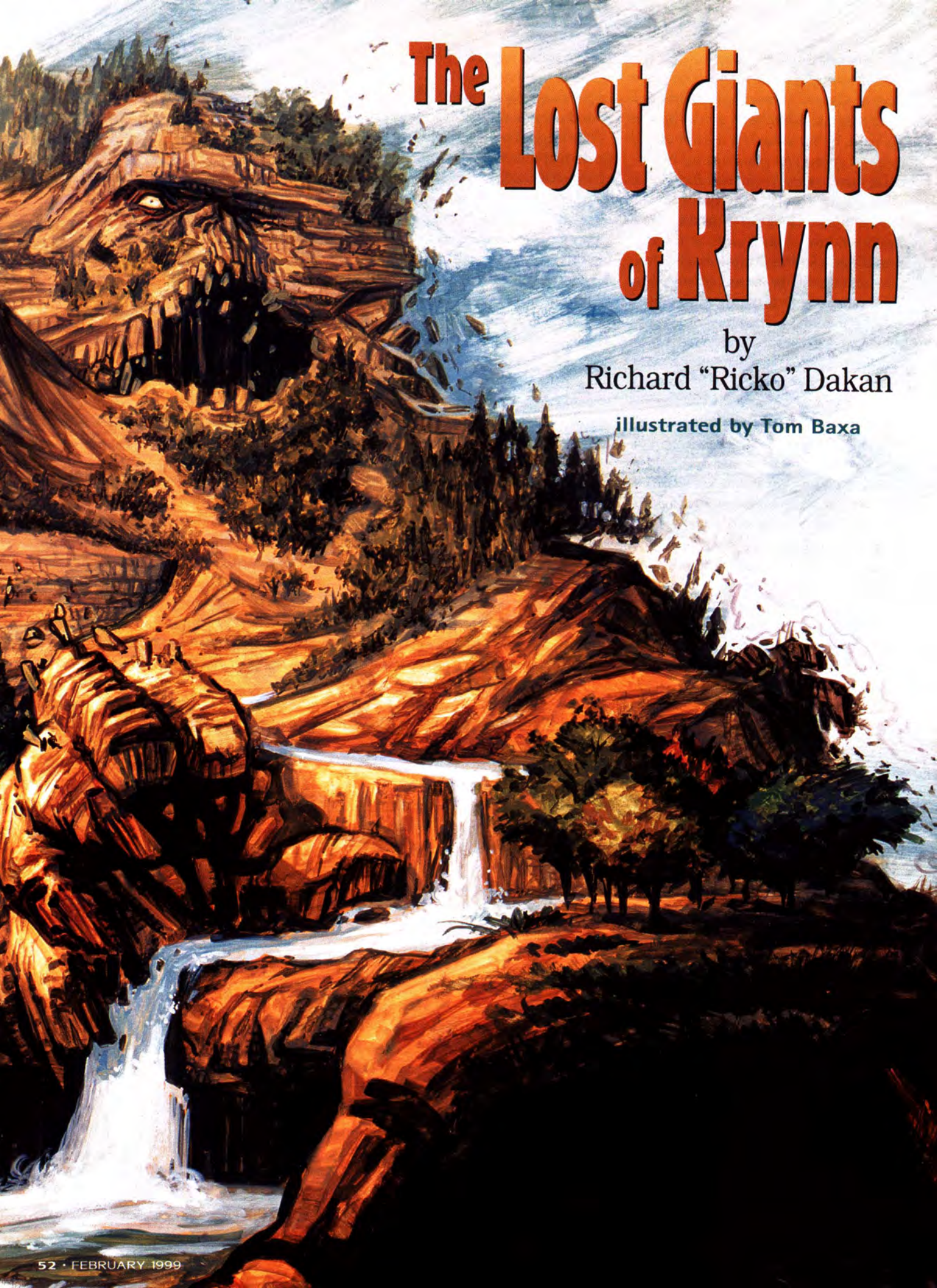
Headquarters Irongate

Interactions With Other Societies Knows of the Society of the Serpent, Crescent League, Fratern Milblinnis, and Keepers

The organization has small cells or individual agents throughout the Flanaess. Some of its spies work in various theater companies, while others travel, either by themselves or with groups of thespians. At least one entire troop is composed of members of the Masks and travels the western lands gathering information in Keoland, Veluna, and Furyondy. Some members join up with adventuring parties, using the group as protection and leaving them when so ordered by the Masks.

Interaction With Other Societies. The Azure Masks know vaguely of the Society of the Serpent, though not of that group's goals. The two organizations have been at odds several times in competition to acquire information. The Masks have infiltrated the Crescent League at its lower levels, and several Masks are presently members of both organizations. The Masks know of the Fratern Milblinnis, but that group holds little of interest to them. They know of the Keepers but, for some reason, keep that knowledge to themselves.

Not generally a conspiracy-theory enthusiast (he doesn't even watch The X-Files*), Andy Miller took most of his inspiration for this article from* The Morning of the Magicians *by Louis Puawells and Jaques Bergier.*



The Lost Giants of Krynn

by
Richard "Ricko" Dakan

illustrated by Tom Baxa

My Dear Associate Bertrem,

I have just finished reading the manuscript you sent me, and I must say I found it most interesting. Who would have thought a brawny warrior like the famous Caramon Majere could put together a readable sentence, much less write a book! Nevertheless he seems to have done a fine job, no doubt with the help of your fine editorial instincts.

That Majere fellow has certainly led a full and interesting life, but there are a few items the two of you missed. I thought I might send along some of my own writings, and perhaps you could include them in a second edition. It is always my pleasure to be of service to a fellow scholar.

I'm not surprised that your associate Caramon did not know of the three creatures of which I'm writing. Two of them are relatively new, and Caramon's best adventuring days are years behind him. The third is, as you will see, quite rare and from well before Caramon's time.

Chiefly, I noticed a significant gap in your section on giants. As you know, I'm somewhat of an authority on giants, and I was quite surprised you did not consult with me before finishing your work. In any event, you did a sufficient job with the ogres descended from giants, but you left out three important creatures that fall under the general heading of "giants."

You see, "giant" is merely a descriptive term. If you examine the ancient texts closely, you will see that the original word for giant applies to any human-shaped being that stands larger than four yards when fully grown. While I understand that giant ogres are the most common beings that fit this description, there are a few others, specifically, the earth giant, the desolation giant, and the cave lords (often called goblin giants). I give you here all the pertinent information on these three races and, as a favor, I have sent on my notes about half-giants. I hope you find these as useful as I think you will.

Your friend and fellow scholar,
Dacyn Koric

Earth Giants (Rumblers)

The earth giants are creatures so rare that most people have never heard of them. Even within the rarefied circles of creature scholarship, few academics are aware that these powerful creatures ever existed. Certain rare texts state that they wandered Krynn more freely during the Age of Dreams, but this might just be myth. According to these texts, the earth giants (A.K.A. rumblers) are immortal beings. Since there is virtually no record of anyone or anything ever killing an earth giant, it is logical to assume that they live still.

When active, an earth giant is an awesome sight. Short of the great dragons of our age, it is likely that no creature larger than the earth giant has ever walked Krynn. The earth giant stands well over 150 feet tall, and its body consists entirely of rock and stone, a walking mountain of earth. The giant's form resembles that of a human: two arms; two legs; a bulbous, barrel-shaped torso; and a roughly spherical head. The giant's feet are solid rock and often have no toes, resembling a foot inside a boot. The hands have two to four large fingers and one opposable thumb. The head is featureless except for a large, toothless rock mouth that is visible only when the giant speaks.

Earth giants apparently have magical senses rather than traditional eyes and ears. According to legend, a moving earth giant is aware of everything that goes on within a mile of it, down to the movement of the smallest insect and the flattening of each blade of grass under its mighty feet. These reports might be exaggerations, but it is certain that while the earth giants have no apparent eyes or ears, they can see and hear. As mentioned above, they can also speak. The voice of an earth giant is like thunder rolling through the mountains. The simplest utterance sends livestock into a panic and drives a stake of fear through the bravest warrior's heart.

Fortunately for most of those fear-struck warriors, earth giants are not creatures of evil. Said to have existed since Krynn itself came into existence, the earth giants have no malice in their stone hearts. They have no known enemies, primarily because there are few things in existence that could cause them serious harm. Some stories speak of

Earth Giants

Saga System: Co 4, Ph 60, In 12, Es 10, Dam: +55, Def –9, also immune to fire, cold, half damage from electricity.

AD&D Game: AC –8; MV 48; HD 26; THAC0 –3; #AT 2; Dmg 4d12 (stomp)/3d12 (fist); SD immune to fire and cold, half damage from electricity; MR 50%; SZ G (150' tall and taller); INT genius (17–18); ML 15; AL N; XP 24,000. The earth giant suffers 2d8 points of damage from *stone shape* spells, 3d8 points of damage from *transmute rock to mud* spells, and 8d6 points of damage from *earthquake* spells.

earth giants and dragons engaging in titanic battles, but most of these come from less than reliable sources. Nevertheless, the stories state that in one instance a pack of five great blue dragons managed to smash an earth giant into pieces using repeated blasts of lightning. While the story seems somewhat fantastical, it could be true. If so, it is the only recorded instance of an earth giant dying.

The earth giants are reported to be quite intelligent, although they have a hard time relating to other intelligent beings. Still, on occasion, earth giants and lesser creatures have managed to communicate. The earth giants, with their perfect memories and almost omniscient awareness of their surroundings, are amazing sources of knowledge. A scholar could easily spend the rest of his life speaking with an earth giant and never scratch the surface of the creature's knowledge. Of course, no earth giant would ever spend that much time talking to a mere mortal. When they do deign to speak, they often answer only a few questions. Still, if these are the right questions, the answers can be invaluable.

The obvious question is, if these things exist, where are they? Why has no one seen them for ages? To answer the last question first, there have been a few unconfirmed sightings of earth giants over the past few centuries. In one instance, several centuries ago, an entire village in Ergoth flew into a panic when an earth giant wandered through their fields. Still, such sightings are extremely rare. We seldom see earth giants because, most of the time, they are asleep.

Earth giants spend centuries at a time sleeping. While they rest, they take in energy from the sun and soil around them, much as plants do. Once their resting spot no longer provides the energy they need, they wake and move on. A sleeping earth giant looks exactly like a large, rocky hill. It simply lies down in a field, half buried in the earth. Dirt accumulates on its body, plants grow, and mortals might even build houses on it. None of this activity disturbs the earth giant in the least. Only when someone tries to chip off a large piece of it to make a wall or house does the giant rouse itself from its slumber. Then there might be trouble, or perhaps the giant might simply shift in its sleep, scaring the intruders and discouraging any further "mining."

Legend has it that certain spells can rouse an earth giant from its slumber. No doubt these spells vanished with the passing of the gods from the land, but even if they remained, it would seem ill advised to awaken such a powerful being. Should you find an earth giant's resting spot, tread carefully. You might have passed by such a place every day for years without disturbing the buried colossus, yet tomorrow it might wake up.

Cave Lords

The word "giant" is a relative term. For humans such as myself, the phrase has definite connotations. "Something much bigger than me" is how most people would probably sum up the word. Something much bigger than a goblin might not seem quite so big to a human or elf. Nevertheless, the goblins have their own giants, and these creatures are a most interesting breed.

These giants prefer that others not call them giants. They prefer the term cave lord, but most goblins continue to call them goblin

giants, at least behind their backs. Average cave lords have all of the features one associates with goblins: flat faces, sharp gnashing teeth, pointed ears, and gray-green skin. Their size and intelligence is what sets them apart from the rest of their kind. Cave lords stand 9 or 10 feet tall, although some can grow to as large as 12 feet (making them true giants). As impressive as their height may be, even more impressive is their girth. Cave lords are obscenely obese, often weighing 600–700 lbs. and, in some cases, much more.

Despite their prodigious rolls of fat, the cave lords are actually strong and surprisingly quick. In matters of manual dexterity, they are unsurpassed by any of their weaker goblin cousins. They can move about quickly, especially in combat. No doubt more than one opponent has fallen in battle because they thought the great goblinoid slow and weak.

The cave lord's strength is feared by the other goblins. That fear allows the cave lord to command their respect and loyalty. The most dangerous thing about facing a cave lord is not its strength or speed but its intelligent use of its goblin followers in battle.

The origin of the cave lord remains unclear, although all current evidence points to the theory that cave lords are relatively new to Krynn. Some say the cave lords are the product of some change brought on by the Chaos War, but no evidence to substantiate this theory exists.

The diet of the cave lord is quite peculiar. They are carnivorous, living not only on animal meat but also on the flesh of other goblin races. Although goblins do not normally practice cannibalism, apparently it is acceptable for a cave lord to eat lesser goblinkind, particularly kobolds. Reliable reports state that some cave lords eat as many as five or six kobolds a day. What's more, devouring these goblin morsels is always done in private and is often accompanied by chanting and the burning of strange herbs. This is particularly odd, since goblin rulers usually take their meals communally so that they can display their personal wealth and power by eating more than everyone else.

Another interesting difference is that cave lords appear to hate the sunlight and might even suffer damage when exposed directly to the sun. Although most goblins prefer dark places, they have little trouble moving about during the day. No one has reported seeing a cave lord during the day, even when bands of goblins under its command are doing battle with the cave lord's foes. One explanation is that the cave lords simply do not like to leave their underground homes. In at least one instance a cave lord grew so fat in his throne room that he could no longer fit through the door leading outside.

Readers are advised to take special caution when dealing with these dangerous creatures. They often seem willing to talk and even make alliances with others when, in fact, their hearts overflow with evil and treachery, and no cave lord should be taken at its word. Of course the cave lords are also rumored to hoard treasure, and this temptation might prove too great for some.

Cave Lords

SAGA System: Co 6, Ph 13, In 6, Es 8, Dmg +6, Def –5.

AD&D Game: AC 5; MV 9; HD 6+1; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d10+5 or by weapon type +5; SZ L (8–12' tall); INT Very–High (11–14); ML 15; AL CE; XP 650.

Desolation Giants

Surely there is no place in the world today more terrifying and interesting than the Desolation. The blasted and cursed peninsula on which the great and terrible Malystryx makes her home will no doubt provide new scholarly subjects for generations to come. The powerful magics combined with the pre-Cataclysm artifacts that washed up on the shore of the Desolation have created a climate where monsters flourish.

The transformative nature of the Desolation has created a race of beings that deserve the title "giant." The desolation giants were once humans with hearts evil enough to rival the most despicable ogres or goblins. Some of these humans served Malystryx willingly, while others came to the Desolation like ants to honey, because evil calls out to evil. Who knows what they expected to find there, but they probably never anticipated what they received.

The swirling evil energies of the Desolation entered into the hearts and bodies of these foul humans. Over a period of several years, they gradually transformed. They began to grow larger, experiencing painful growth spurts of several feet in just a few months. Their muscles bulged and grew with them, giving them new-found strength no normal human could ever possess. Their skin turned rough then leathery, fingers transformed into claws, and teeth into fangs. Coarse, rough hair like that of a boar grew in uneven patches across their bodies, and they became what they are today.

A fully transformed desolation giant stands 15 feet tall, although they tend to stand hunched over, their long, muscular arms almost touching the ground. They have powerful legs with a different form and musculature than that of normal humans. The legs appear like those of a great cat or possibly a dragon: good for running and perfect for leaping. The giant's skin is an inch thick, tough as hardened leather, and rough to the touch. It can easily deflect all but the most well-placed blows from a sword or spear. The arms of these creatures are out of proportion as well; they are so long that when the giants hunch over (as they usually do), their fingers nearly touch the ground. Like coiled vipers waiting to strike, the giants can attack quickly and unexpectedly, slashing or grabbing with their sharp claws. Their faces still look vaguely human, albeit with mad fires in their eyes and constant expressions of insane, murderous intent. The head is invariably bald, covered with the same thick skin that protects the rest of the body.

All desolation giants are adults, since they are created from adult, evil-hearted humans. There are male and female desolation giants, although the transformation leaves them almost sexless in appearance. They generally do not wear clothes at all, although many decorate themselves with trophies from some of their more significant kills. For example, one sighting of a desolation giant describes the beast wearing a string of hundreds of human ears wrapped around his waist. Bone piercings in the ears and nose, as well as tattoos, are also fairly common among the desolation giants.

Desolation Giants

Saga System: Co 8, Ph 26, In 6, Es 6, Dmg +15, Def –5, also pounce and rake

AD&D Game: AC 3; MV 15; HD 6+6; THAC0 15; #AT 3 (claw/claw/ bite); Dmg 1d8+2/1d8+2/1d6; SZ H (15' tall); INT Average–Very (8–12); ML 14; AL CE; XP 650. These giants can leap up to 60 feet horizontally and 30 feet vertically.

Since desolation giants retain all the intelligence and knowledge they had before their transformation, most of them still speak Common. In addition, the giants have developed a rough, simple language of their own that they use when coordinating actions in battle or when squabbling among themselves. Do not be fooled into thinking that because desolation giants are intelligent one can reason with them. The Desolation long ago burned out whatever human compassion or reason they once had. These creatures are quite insane, and if they speak with a nongiant, it is only to lull their prey into a false sense of security before they strike.

Although fully capable of building and using tools and weapons, desolation giants prefer to attack with their bare hands. Their powerful legs and long arms allow them to close with an opponent quickly. Desolation giants often leap through the air onto their prey, knocking them to the ground and then disarming them. Then, as likely as not, the giant allows its prey to get back up just to prolong the fight. The giant plays with the poor soul for the next five minutes to an hour, depending on what other events and opponents there are to attract its attention. Eventually it grows tired of the game and dispatches the worn-out victim.

The exact number of these deformed and corrupted humans living within the Desolation has been estimated at only a few hundred at most. The giants live in small communities of five or six, usually dwelling in caves or simple buildings that they construct themselves. These social groups often hunt together, especially when they are after larger game like ogres or minotaurs. However, individual giants also head off alone, looking for personal conquests. Most social activity among these giants appears to revolve around telling tales of their past atrocities. The right to brag about performing some particularly terrible act is important to all desolation giants.

The giants also have an interesting relationship with Malystryx, their nominal lord and creator. They do not worship her as a god, although Malys would no doubt be pleased if they did. Nor do they serve her as loyal soldiers. Apparently Malys has tried to tame them on several occasions to no avail (thus accounting for reports that at one time there were two or three times as many desolation giants as there are today), but the giants themselves cannot stomach the idea of taking orders from anyone. At the same time, they respect Malys and would never do anything to directly harm her or her cause. They simply prefer to do evil in their own time and in their own way. Malystryx has come to accept this and even relish in it, sometimes dropping prisoners into the middle of desolation giant territory and then flying up to watch the giants play with their food.

Half-Giant

The idea may appall many readers, but this is, after all, a study of appalling creatures. The concept of a human and giant mating seems improbable at best, but rest assured, it does happen (albeit rarely). The product of such a union is a half-giant. Of course, a half-giant is really just a very large half-ogre. In fact, in some rare instances a half-giant results from the union between a human and a common ogre, much in the same way ogres sometimes give birth to giants. In either case, the result is similar: the parents are usually appalled at what they have brought into the world and would prefer to abandon the child. For those half-giants that do survive childhood, life continues to be hard for the rest of their days.

When fully grown (which takes between twenty five and thirty years), a half-giant stands between 8 and 12 feet tall. Unlike their giant forebearers, most half-giants have human proportions and less bestial features. In some cases the half-giant looks just like a very large human. Less fortunate offspring might inherit the giant's sloping brow and apelike arms. Among the relatively peaceful communities of hill giants, these offspring are accepted reluctantly into the clan. The others might view them with suspicion and prejudice but the half-giant is able to live a relatively normal life (for a giant).

It is when half-giants are born to human parents that they have real problems. Hill giants are used to living the lives of outcasts. Humans, however, tend to be self-conscious of what others think of them. Human prejudice causes the half-giant difficulties throughout life. Viewed as ugly and freakish, humans constantly berate and slight them. Of course, once the poor child grows to his full height, there are few humans brave enough to taunt the half-giant to his face. That just means the abuse becomes more subtle but no less hurtful.

Many half-giants born to a human mother eventually flee human society and try to find a giant community willing to accept them. Most find some kind-hearted giant clan willing to take them in out of pity. Others end up living the life of a hermit, alone in the wilderness away from all who would hurt them. Unfortunately for these lonely souls, half-giants are so rare that they have not had the numbers to form communities of their own. Most half-giants live out their whole lives without ever seeing another of their own kind.

Some strong-willed and thick-skinned half-giants do manage to make a go of life among humans. Although seldom the most intelligent children in town, half-giants are always the strongest. An amazingly strong person can find a lot of people willing to pay for that strength, no matter what the package looks like. Half-giants almost always end up working in some strength related field. Some are manual laborers, but, more often, the half-giant becomes a mercenary or soldier of some sort. Their ability to defeat most opponents through sheer force makes them highly valued. With a little training, the giant kin can become nearly unstoppable warriors. The only hard part is finding armor that fits them.

A traveler or adventurer journeying across Krynn seldom encounters a half-giant outside of some civilized situation. The few wild half-giants avoid contact with all others. Those who live among giants also stay well away from any but their giant kin. That leaves only the half-giants raised among humans who have somehow found a place for themselves in society. Of course many of them end up with less than good masters. One can never picture the Knights of Solamnia or the Knights of Takhisis allowing a half-giant into their midst. However, other, more brutal armies composed of goblins, ogres, and less savory humans employ the half-giants. There are, of course, exceptions, and the Legion of Steel is known to have accepted at least one half-giant into its ranks.

Richard "Ricko" Dakan is a freelance writer based in Sarasota, Florida. He has contributed to such varied roleplaying game lines as the Conspiracy X, DRAGONLANCE® FIFTH AGE®, *and* ALTERNITY® games.

Half-Giant Heroes

SAGA System: Half-giant heroes are made just like other heroes with the following minimums and maximums:

Agility: 5 max.
Dexterity: 5 max.
Endurance: 7B min.
Strength: 8 min.
Reason: C max.
Spirit: D max.
Presence: C max.

In addition, when creating a half-giant, the player should automatically subtract two from the cards played for both Spirit and Presence (never reducing these below 1). On the plus side, the player automatically add 2 to the half-giant's Strength, which might raise it over 10.

AD&D Game: Half-giants have the following adjustments after rolling for ability scores:

Strength: +2
Constitution: +1
Intelligence: –1
Wisdom: –1
Charisma: –1

Half-giants have the following minimums and maximums:

Strength: 14/18
Dexterity: 3/18
Constitution: 12/18
Intelligence: 3/14
Wisdom: 3/15
Charisma: 2/15

Half-giants can become only Fighters, Thieves, or Fighter/Thieves. They are limited to 12th level as Fighters and 10th level as Thieves. Half-giants have thick skin (equivalent to hide armor) and possess a natural Armor Class of 6. They receive 8 bonus hit points at 1st level.

illustrated by Rebecca Guay
RG

Fiction by
Diane Duane

The Span

It was noontime of the thirty-first of Summer when Sirronde came slogging up the steep path to the head of the Sender Pass, pausing among the boulders choking the col's throat. She peered down the far side, trying to catch a glimpse of her death.

Below her, a narrow, gravel-strewn path led eastward and downward. Cracked, needly limestone cliffs plunged down from either side of the path. Where it seemed to drop straight off into nothing, a mile of blue air reached out below her and above the Sender Valley proper—a distant vista of fields patchworked in dark gold and green, the patches narrowly lined with pale drystone walls and hedges. A less deadly looking landscape was difficult to imagine. Yet, *You will look for your death,* the true-dream had said, *and will not see it, but it waits regardless ...*

The path wound from side to side between the two mountains. After its first switchback, the slope of the path lessened, so that Sirronde was able to spend more time enjoying the view. The sky was that particular hard dark blue typical of the mountains of the high South—except to her left, where the air above the peaks was milky pale. There the Sender Glacier lay, further betrayed by the mile-wide slope of scree and boulders laid out like a fan at the feet of the mountain-spur, and the hundred bright runnels of meltwater braiding themselves together at the bottom of the glacier's terminal moraine to form the uppermost waters of the Sen.

The path became a road, exposing a different aspect each time it turned. Some of the fields between the hedgerows were golden, the first hay already cut and new green showing. Other fields showed bare golden stubble, the standing straw of barley already in the barns. Between the fields ran the white lines of dusty roads, knotting together here and there. Near some of the knots houses were scattered, all built of stone as was typical in a place where wood was too scarce to use as anything but fuel.

And Goddess knows there are plenty of stones. The fields were clear, but where cultivation stopped, great boulders lay scattered everywhere. People might have wrested this land to their use, but the glacier still owned it and had left pointed suggestions that, when the weather turned, it might own it again. *Could that be why She sent me?* Sirronde thought. *Is the glacier on the move again? Am I supposed to stop it?*

It was getting hot. Sirronde shouldered out of her pack and slipped off her floppy brown wool-and-cotton overtunic. This left her in a loose linen shirt, leather breeches, and a belt from which hung a knife at one side, a longer leather scabbard at the other. She rolled up the overtunic, stuffed it into her pack, shouldered it all again, and headed downward. *Are there possibly Fyrd left in these mountains?* Sirronde wondered. *Or other monsters?* She had heard enough stories about the depredations of mantichores, but this far south, truth and legend often got badly tangled.

North of where the road stopped and the water started, Sirronde saw a scattering of pale specks, and on both sides of the water, a graceful pale curve, incomplete—two halves of a bridge, leaning toward one another from the cliffy riverbanks and obscured by scaffolding. Farther north and east, on the near side of the river, a small graying patch of land, veiled by a faint haze of dust, suggested a quarry.

Interesting, Sirronde thought, looking at the bridge as she came over the last hill before the village. As far as she knew, there was no built bridge on the Sen anywhere south of the Arlid, but this place could use one. With the steepness of those banks, the river must be a misery to cross any time but during the dead of winter, when no one down here traveled much anyway.

The village was a little cluster of perhaps ten houses, stretched along the last road before the river. Coming in along its dusty main street, Sirronde passed some stonebuilt cattle sheds, then a big old house with an ivy bush tied up over the door to show it served beer and wine. *Probably the town common-house.* Various pigs of the big golden-skinned Yellow Darthene breed snuffled and rooted in front of the place as Sirronde passed, and a flight of swifts came shrieking down the street behind her, cruising so low that their sickle wings stirred the dust as they snapped up passing flies.

The place was like the tiny hamlet where Sirronde had grown up, in the north. Children stared at her from open doorways, open-mouthed at the sudden appearance of a stranger in a place so far from anywhere else. Sirronde made her way casually through town, nodding to those she passed—a man throwing pot-scourings out into the street, a woman weeding her vegetable patch, another pumping enthusiastically at her forge as she shod a drowsy plowhorse—and headed for the river.

She paused by it just long enough to be shocked at the sheerness of the drop to the old ford—ten yards at least, and no way down but by a rough switchback path with holding-ropes driven into the cliff by iron spikes. *This will be much preferable*, she thought as she turned to walk up toward the bridge. Scaffolding was tied and spiked up all over the growing twin arcs of stone, and complex-looking piers and crossbuttresses of wood held up both sides of its unfinished span. The design was beautiful, the width and thickness of the bridge decreasing gradually toward the center. Workers moved here and there, some helping move a big stone off a pallet into place on one half of the span, others pushing a rope-ferry off into the river to pull it to the far side with a load of stone and buckets of mortar. Off to one side, chisels rang.

Some yards from the bottom of the nearer half of the span were a rough wooden table and a couple of long benches. At the table, bent over it and paging through a pile of parchments, stood a tall woman in a large, loose tunic and breeches. Her long red hair was pulled back tight and tied at the neck.

The woman looked up at Sirronde as she came—an expression suggesting she considered Sirronde a potential problem. Then her glance lingered briefly on the sheathed Rod. After a moment she nodded. "Fair day, Rodmistress," the woman said, and picked up a rock from the table, dropping it on the parchments to keep them in place in the wind.

"Fair day," Sirronde said, "and the Goddess's greeting to you. Is this the road to Egen?"

"It will be, as soon as the bridge is done."

Sirronde smiled. "You'd be the builder, then."

"By the king's courtesy, yes," the woman said. "Dyla is my name."

"The King of Arlen's engineer? Well met!"

"Thank you," said Dyla.

"It's a long way south for you," Sirronde said. "This must have been an important job."

"A tricky one, maybe," Dyla said. She sounded impatient. "But it will make getting stone north from the quarry easier. This is some of the best limestone in Arlen."

"So how is it going?"

"Oh, very well, now. Very well indeed."

Sirronde underheard a flash of anger, despite the casual words. "'Now'?" Sirronde said, trying to sound innocent.

"There was some trouble earlier," said the Builder. "Subsidence of the banks on both sides. You have to expect that when you're putting real pressure on the ground for the first time. We'll be setting in the keystone early next week. Then the scaffolding comes down, and we can all get back to our lives."

She looked pleased, but Sirronde sensed something sealed under the pleasure—and the sealing-over was new, a scab rather than a scar. "It's a wonderful piece of work," she said. "But isn't it harder to do it this way, without any piers to hold up the span in the middle?"

"They wouldn't last," Dyla said. "You don't know what this river is like in the spring." She looked upstream. "Huge rocks come rolling down into the headwaters from the glacier in the thaws. They'd smash any pier. A clean single-span arch was the only way. That's been the source of the trouble. This kind of bridge is the hardest to build."

"You might have called in someone with the Fire," Sirronde said, trying to sound casual.

The master-builder looked at her suspiciously but with humor. "Angling for work, Mistress? Business too slow?"

"Never that. But wouldn't it have been easier?"

"Maybe," Dyla said. "But maybe I'm old-fashioned. In past times there wasn't so much Fire around, and people built bridges very well without it. Most of those are still standing. Blue Fire, now—" Dyla looked thoughtfully at Sirronde. "Do Fireworks keep working after the death of the one who wrought them?"

"All the ones I've seen, if they're well wrought."

"'If,'" Dyla said. "Well enough for you. But *I'm* responsible for this. I can't have it dropping into the river when someone drops dead."

"You would be thinking of sorcery," Sirronde said. "Among Fireworks, death-failure comes only of ill intention. Even among works made with hands, nothing lasts forever."

"Stone does," said the Builder, "nearly, if you treat it right. And it needs to. People will need this bridge after all of us are long gone. Let's just say I prefer working with forces I understand. Cohesion, gravity ..." She turned away, smiling.

Sirronde smiled too, but rue edged the look. Though everyone alive had at least a spark of the Fire, those who didn't have enough of it to focus and use could sometimes come to feel that the Flame was a waste of time, something unimportant. "I hope it may go well for you, madam," Sirronde said, and turned to make her way back into town.

She turned in at the house with the ivy-bush over the door. It was, as she thought, the town's common house, beginning to fill with people wanting a cup or a sup at the end of the day. Sirronde sat down by a window and waited. Soon enough the commoner came over to her, a big bustling woman, muscular and fair, who summed up Sirronde as quickly as the master-builder had, if more kindly. "Tell me if I'm wrong—" she said.

Sirronde smiled, reached down to the longer of her two scabbards, and pulled out her Rod, a slender branch of blackthorn as long as her forearm, sanded smooth and polished to a soft green-brown gleam. Blue Fire wreathed and danced briefly around the exposed length of it. She slipped it back into place.

"Thought so. Firebearer, what would you like for dinner?"

"I'm able to pay—"

"Nonsense," the commoner said. "Would I ask *Her* to? Are you passing through, or will you stay the night?"

"The night at least," Sirronde said.

"There's a room upstairs for you, as long as you like. Meantime, dinner is rockpool perch or old chicken in lentils."

"How old?"

The commoner raised her eyebrows. "Old enough to have known better than to stand still last night."

Sirronde chuckled. "That sounds fine. Thank you, mistress—"

"Leni," said the commoner.

"Sirronde."

"Sirronde, you're welcome in Dalthant. White wine? Red? Or barleydraft?"

"Draft for the moment."

When Leni headed for the kitchen, people sitting at some of the other tables began to drift over to Sirronde to greet her. Shortly she was submerged in names, trying to pay proper attention to their owners and learn their faces while answering questions. That she was a Rodmistress was an attraction, but her value as a wandering rumormonger seemed greater to these people. For the next hour or so, as drinks and food came, Sirronde concentrated on telling her listeners all the news she knew of the Middle Kingdoms. It took a good deal to satisfy them, and it was nearly an hour before they fell quiet long enough for her to say, "So tell me, who or what here needs the Fire? Is anyone sick?"

"Not at all," said a little bald wrinkled man called Hatch. "Except for Arl who has breathing trouble, and old Risk the herbman is taking care of that just fine."

"Are all the animals well?"

"No problem with them, Mistress," said Maren, the russet-haired town smith. "The herd's prospering."

"And just look at the size of those chickens," Hatch said. "They run into the milking pens and kick the cows around!"

Sirronde had seen them scratching in the street and bullying the pigs and could believe it. "Anyone unwell in the mind or the heart?"

"No, not at all."

"Of course there's Rald the town gossip—" Sirronde then got to listen to half an hour of energetic backbiting until her pitcher of barleydraft ran out. Finally Leni arrived with the chicken stew and a pitcher of wine, a cool white from the southern Medelnya grape. Her two husbands came out of the kitchen with more plates and bowls, some of which wound up in front of Sirronde's tablemates. Silence fell for a while, punctuated only by the clatter of spoons on crockery.

The door creaked, and faces looked up at someone coming in. It was the master-builder, Dyla, and a young man, tall and handsome, who smiled around the room, and incidentally at Sirronde when he saw her, then turned to follow his lady.

Lovers, Sirronde thought. By the expressions worn by her tablemates—some sly, some noncommittal, some disapproving—she knew she was right.

"Know who that is?" said one of the men sitting by her, a gruff silverhaired old creature called Spalin.

"Dyra d'Furnen," Sirronde said. "Master-builder to King Freol."

"Master-builder," said Spalin, softly scornful. "Haven't seen her build anything that stayed up, yet."

"She said the bridge has had some problems," Sirronde said.

"Fell down twice," said Maren. "That's problems, if you like."

"All those stones had to be fished out of the river," said Hatch. "Those that wasn't shattered. The biggest had to be quarried out again. Up the bridge went, and no sooner did the scaffolding come away than down the bridge came again."

"They didn't even *finish* taking the scaffolding down—"

"Messengers came riding down the road from the King—"

"From the King's Treasurer, you mean," said Spalin. "Told madam high-and-mighty there that the bridge had better stay up the third time. Otherwise, the King would bring in someone else, and herself would have to make up the lost price of the labor." His voice had dropped to a whisper. Sirronde saw Dyra throw a glance in their direction.

"It looks to be going well enough this time," said Sirronde.

"It looked all right the first two times," said Maren.

Sirronde drank again, put her mug down. Hatch poured more wine. "Might be some kind of curse on her," a slight dark woman called Berynn said. "She's supposed to be a great builder—"

"She is," Sirronde said. "She's famous all over the north. She rebuilt Blackcastle in Darthis after the earthquake."

"Then why can't she build a bridge that stays up?"

Sirronde shook her head. *Subsidence.* It had to be more than that.

Sirronde's tablemates abruptly quieted. There was a small sidetable near them, with sauces and seasonings on it, and Sirronde looked up from her wine to see Dyla standing there, spooning conserve of hot southern whitefruit onto her lentils. Turning toward the table where the young man sat, she paused a moment by Sirronde. "We were hurried earlier, Rodmistress. I didn't catch your name."

You didn't ask for it, Sirronde thought. "Sirronde d'Aneik."

"Darthene, with a name like that."

"Originally. But now that I'm out on Her business, every country's mine."

Dyla put her eyebrows up and looked amused. "And everything's Her business, eh?"

"Why wouldn't it be? She made it all."

Dyla smiled in the manner of someone graciously conceding a point to an inferior and headed back to sit with a group whom Sirronde's tablemates had identified as the town elders. They began a serious bout of flattery directed toward some favor she could do when she went back to Prydon with her commission finished. Sirronde glanced over at Dyla's young man, sitting in the middle of the group but ignored. He threw her a look in return that said, *It's nothing new. I'm used to it.*

She smiled back, then turned her attention to her seat-companions. "Handsome one, isn't he," said Berynn.

"He is," Sirronde said. "Is he local?"

There were guffaws at that. "Him? Look at the hands on him!" said Maren.

"Young Adri's from one of them cities, like her," said another of them. "Never been off a paved street in his life until now, I bet."

"I saw the Goddess on a paved street once," Sirronde said, and her tablemates stared. She poured herself another cup of wine. "In Darthis. She had just bought some parsnips in the market, and She was saying that She thought the prices were a little high. The stallholder was complaining right back at Her about what his wholesaler charged him." Sirronde smiled at the memory. "She was wearing the Cloak which is the night sky, and he looked right at Her and never saw, never knew."

"How … how could anyone see Her and not know?" one of them whispered.

"The same way someone could look at *him* and not see Her," Sirronde said, glancing at Adri. "Or any of you."

There were a few rueful chuckles at that, and after a breath or two her seatmates went back to other gossip, and their food and drink. The room was full, a bedlam of voices and clattering plates, and Leni was doing her best to be like the Goddess, everywhere at once. Her husbands, more pragmatic, had given up and were having their own dinners.

Conversation went on for a good while after the food finished, but as evening drew on the room began to empty. Dyla and Adri were early to leave. "The sooner asleep, the sooner back to work," Dyla said, and around her Sirronde could underhear people restraining themselves from slighting remarks based on the comment. *They really don't like her much. But they like him well enough.*

She could see why. Even at first glance, Adri seemed as accessible and open as Dyla seemed cool and remote. As he went out after Dyla, the young man threw Sirronde another of those amused, resigned looks, as if he knew what people were thinking. He brushed past their table, making for the door—

—and Sirronde suddenly tasted a peculiar emptiness nearby, the lack of a wholeness or certainty, as if she had bitten into an apple and found no core, or discovered that the core had already been removed. Here was a person whose soul was not his own.

She blinked in astonishment. Behind her, the door shut, and the feeling faded.

You will look for your death there, the true-dream had said, *and you will not see it. But it waits regardless …*

Now she understood why. Knowing what was wrong with Adri, she would have to try to put it right. But if she put herself between him and the One to whom he seemed to have sold himself, His rage would fall on her.

Sirronde pushed her cup away and went to find her bed.

She did not sleep much that night, or dream, but she thought a great deal about the true-dream, now weeks old. It had started innocently enough, in fragments, as dreams will—images of a stone-flagged floor, a dim stone-walled interior lit by a tallow-dip, the legs of a chair. But the dusty cloak flung over the back of a chair was full of the faint drift and glitter of stars.

Sirronde had seen Her as the Mother before, but rarely had She looked quite so motherly or so hugely pregnant, well into the chronic-backache stage. The Goddess sat in the chair and knitted with very fine yarn and casual speed, an extremely domestic sight, but what She knitted was shimmering faintly with the forces that bound the smallest bits of matter together. Looking more narrowly at the yarn, Sirronde glimpsed the double-spiral twist and recognized the pattern.

The Mother glanced up at her, nodded amiably enough, and finished the row She was working on. Then She put the knitting aside and stood, groaning and bracing Her back. Sirronde felt the whole fabric of things tremble and move, and she realized exactly what lay inside Her womb: everything in the world, the World itself, herself included. *When is this, for Her?* Sirronde wondered. *Before the beginning of things? Before the Fall? Or does the question even have meaning?* For time tangled in and out of itself and knotted reason into immobility when you tried to see it the way She did. Finally Sirronde put the issue aside. "What exactly am I supposed to do, madam?"

The Mother went out the door. Sirronde followed, and together they looked out across the broad landscape. Far away across the green hills a thunderstorm-anvil rumbled along, trailing a dark gauze of rain behind it. Hidden lightning flickered uneasily in the belly of the cloud. "Go where you were going anyway. South. Of course," She said, "you won't find anything wrong when you get there."

Sirronde blinked at that. The Mother gave her a narrow look. "Nothing ever seems wrong at *first*," She said. "It didn't seem so for Me, either, when *I* started. But you and I know better now."

"When I find what's wrong—"

"You'll do what I would do, I'm sure," the Mother said, and She sat down on the bench outside with another soft groan. "But you'll want to ask yourself whether you're ready to take on this burden."

She glanced down at her belly, resigned. Sirronde felt sorry for Her. A Rodmistress knew that every act *was* the act of Creation. Every time you acted, you put your shoulders under that burden, of possibly getting it wrong and having to deal with the consequences, as She had. After only a moment or an aeon of looking in the wrong direction during the ecstasy of the making of the worlds, the Great Death had slipped in from outside and insinuated itself inextricably into what the Goddess had made. Now, a world's life later, She was still dealing with the Shadow that had fallen over Her making. She would never win completely; this world would have to die before it could be made anew. But in the meantime, She would make it run as best it could. For that purpose, there was blue Fire in the world, and Rodmistresses and Fireworkers to use it.

Assuming, of course, they could work out what to use it on.

"So go on," said the Mother. "See what you can find. And see that It doesn't kill you first."

"Even if It did," Sirronde said, "it would be on Your business. That makes it worthwhile."

"Daughter, you're an idiot," said the Goddess. "Any fool can get killed on My business. It's the ones who stay alive on it who do the most good." Nonetheless, She smiled.

The unalloyed warmth of that divine regard was like the Sun on Sirronde's skin. Shortly Sirronde had realized that it *was* the Sun, shining through a gap in the trees under which she'd been sleeping. She had gotten right up, glad and excited, and started on the road that would lead, weeks later, to the Sender Pass. Now, lying in the guest bed upstairs at the common-house, and looking east through the unshuttered window at the bright upthrown rays of the Sun rising behind the mountains, she yawned and rubbed her aching head, hoping she was not going to turn out to be one of the fools.

Later that morning, Sirronde walked down to the riverbank. The bridge-building operation had a hurried, pressured feel about it, much unlike the end-of-the-day feeling of the evening before. Sirronde looked about and saw nothing of Dyla, but she saw fifty people working hard and fast, with the pressure of someone's impatient will pushing them every second.

Some workers were setting in blocks with the carved images that would be the end-pillars of the bridge—bas-relief images of the Goddess's firstborn, the Lovers, each reaching out to his partner, "the One with whom Hands are Joined." The Two Themselves had inevitably become a symbol of that other duality, the paired light and darkness at the bottom of the human soul. While held in balance, the stress of that duality could make the best things in life. But when the balance broke, when the Shadow drowned love in darkness, then the Two to Whom the Goddess had first given Herself, and Whom She had given each other, had seized one another by the throat rather than by the hands. Jealousy had been invented, and after it came murder.

No one would be carving *that* part of the story on any bridges. Here They stood as They had before the Fall—looking toward one another, confident in each other though not actually touching. "It's nice work, isn't it?" said the voice from behind her.

Sirronde turned and saw Adri standing there. "It is," she said as he walked over. "Your sculptor is an artist."

"Launye, yes. She asked to be assigned to this work."

"The people are lucky to have something of hers for their town. And how are you liking it here? Do you miss Prydon?"

He looked at Sirronde with some surprise. "How could you— Oh, of course," he said, looking at her Rod.

Sirronde smiled. "Hardly. Your accent's plain enough."

"Is it that strong?" He laughed. "I guess city folks don't think so much about accents, except other people's."

"You'd be right there," Sirronde said. "I never stopped hearing about mine when I was there last summer."

She looked around at the fields and the mountains, indistinct through the morning mist: the underlying silence made a profound contrast with the bustle and noise of Prydon. "It must not be easy for you here."

"Well, there's not much to do," Adri said, looking at a tall slender form clambering up a ladder at one side of the scaffolding. "She doesn't have much time for anything else when she gets sent on these trips."

"At least you get to travel widely," Sirronde said. "See all kinds of places, meet people."

"*She* meets them, yes," Adri said. Then he smiled to take the edge off his words. "But she's the one who has the King's ear. To her loved, people are polite enough … when they see me as a way to keep in the Master-builder's good books. Mostly they see me as a barrier." The smile faded. "Sorry, uh—"

"Sirronde," she said, looking at the bridge. "Will it be all right this time, do you think?"

"Oh, yes," Adri said, and his voice was light enough—but a slight tremor ran under it. "She'll finish it this time."

And I think you know exactly why, Sirronde thought.

That slender shape was standing still in the scaffolding, looking back at them. Even at this distance, Sirronde could feel Dyla's uncomfortable regard, like the edge of a sharp blade.

"She is a formidable woman," Sirronde said.

"That she is," Adri said. "What she starts, she finishes, one way or another."

"That I'll be staying to see." The shape watching them ducked into the scaffolding and was lost to sight. "Meanwhile," Sirronde said, "I have some other things to do today."

"Suppertime then, perhaps," Adri said, and turned away with a casual wave and a smile.

He did not come to supper, though Dyla did. She sat with the town elders again, talking a great deal, quietly, wearily, about the way the work was going—about how other works had gone, elsewhere, and the new labors awaiting her when she returned to Prydon and had time to take counsel with the King. Sirronde ate and drank and chatted into the evening with the same group of tablemates, aware that it was not the town elders to whom Dyla was talking, but to her.

Eventually, fairly late, Dyla left, yawning. As she went out the door, she cast an assessing glance at Sirronde: *Are you impressed now? Do you realize who I am? Do not cross me or pry too closely into anything of mine.* Sirronde did not meet the glance directly, but she felt it go by her, like a sword through the air next to her head.

She drank her wine, listening to the murmur of voices around her, gossiping, storytelling, until finally, late, Leni went around to the tables and started shooing out customers. "Sirronde," she said as she passed, "was the bed warm enough last night? Did you need another quilt?"

"No, it was fine. Thank you, Leni."

"Good. Sleep well, then. I'm off." Leni trimmed the wicks of the two lamps, went around the room to fasten the shutters, and took the tallow dips away to quench them in the kitchen.

Sirronde sat late by the dying common-room fire, trying again to think what to do. The fire drowsed itself down to

embers, and she drowsed too. The squeak of the door opening finally made her sit up and look over her shoulder.

Adri was standing there. After a moment, he shut the door.

"What are you doing here?" Sirronde said.

He came to the fire and sat in the other chair, silent.

"You were missed at dinner. Where's Dyla?"

"Asleep." He reached out for the poker and stirred some of the embers of the fire with it.

Good. There would be no better place or time to begin. "Adri," Sirronde said softly, "you're missing something important."

"What?"

"You know what I mean. You have given up a part of yourself not normally a mortal's to dispose of.

The silence stretched long.

"It was something I could give her," he said, his voice brittle. "Since I can give her little else."

Everything lying hidden behind the words abruptly came washing over Sirronde. She felt Adri's many months of frustration since he met Dyla and found himself bound into a love off-balance, one side of the relationship open and easy, but the other too tightly bound in its own needs to recognize the requirements of the larger bond between them. And there were other needs that he did not think about, finding them too painful.

"She is not exactly … the nurturing kind, is she?" Sirronde said.

Adri shook his head. "She makes," he said. "Brilliantly."

"But she doesn't mother."

"No."

And you want to father. But that was too private to mention.

"The bridge," Adri said. "I'm sure they've told you."

"It came up in conversation."

"She was furious, the first time it fell," Adri said. "She did what she normally would have done—started building again, with greatest care. Every angle measured ten times instead of three, every stress recalculated, every stone checked, obsessively, fifty times, a hundred. Her artisans got sick of it. And then, when everything was finished, it all fell down again."

Adri stirred the fire, shook his head. "It was frightening," he said. "She would barely speak to anyone, even to me. Nothing mattered but that bridge. She started her plans for the reconstruction. Then the messengers came from the King. She was needed up north for more important projects. She would have her chance to put things right, but if the bridge fell again—"

Sirronde held herself silent.

"I was no good to her," Adri said, at the end of a long silence during which he turned the poker around in his hands. "I prayed, I made all kinds of plans—to send for a sorcerer, for a Rodmistress even—but there was no way to do it without her finding out. It would have been the worst kind of betrayal. She's so proud, she doesn't trust anything but her own accomplishment, the works her hands can do. She couldn't eat. She couldn't sleep. She was wearing herself down to the point where she couldn't work. I feared for her mind. Or her life."

Sirronde merely nodded. *That fierce concentration, repeatedly frustrated, that precious reputation threatened. A mind might break under the strain, do something final …*

"Then I was out walking one day, and I was leaning on a wall—" Adri scrubbed at his face. "A young man came and leaned by me. A local, I thought. We talked a while. He was a good listener. I told him everything, and after a while I said I would do anything to help her, anything, sell my soul even—"

"You didn't mean it," Sirronde said.

"It was a joke. But then he said, 'That might just work.' And I knew right then that it was Him, and He could do what He said He could. And I said, 'Yes, do it.'"

Adri was silent a while more. "He just walked away," Adri said. "I didn't see where. He said, 'The bridge will rise, now, and you will meet your loved on it when it's done. I'll meet you there, and take what's due me."

Sirronde knew the ceremony he meant, in which the first creatures to set foot on a new bridge are two lovers, who meet and embrace at its center, above its keystones—a symbol of the Goddess's love, which holds the world together. The carvings on the end-posts of the bridge were an oblique reference to that ceremony. "And now," Adri said, "all the problems have fallen away. The bridge will be done by the tenday's end. Then …" Adri broke off, and put his face in his hands.

"Adri," Sirronde said finally, "there must be something that can be done. It's going to take time to think what, that's all."

"I don't see how it will matter," Adri said, staring at the table. *"I gave Him my soul."*

That was the crux of it. Promises made to the Shadow, like those made to the Goddess, were always kept.

Sirronde patted his hand. "I'll get to work. Probably it's better if we say nothing to Dyla of this."

"You think I would?"

"As the time gets closer and emotions get out of hand," Sirronde said, "you might be surprised what you feel impelled to do. Guard yourself. As for the rest of it, we'll talk again when I have an idea," Sirronde said, and left.

A day went past, two days, three. No idea came, though. Sirronde fasted and prayed and worked with her Rod and delved down inside her until her head spun. But her mind was as empty of ideas afterward as before. Adri did not come to most meals in town. Dyla did, and she ignored Sirronde pointedly. The fourth day passed. On the fifth morning, with the bridge scheduled to be finished in three days, Sirronde leaned against a drystone wall half a league outside Dalthant and looked eastward toward the mountains, rolling her Rod idly between her hands.

There is a loophole in every enchantment, every sorcery, every wreaking with the Fire, her instructors had told her, but it was fallen divinity to be dealt with here, not fallible humanity. There were no loopholes to exploit. Adri had given the

Shadow his soul freely. To some promises, whether made to ultimate love or ultimate evil, one was inevitably held.

What can I possibly do?

There was always the obvious solution—walk out first across the bridge, announce the bargain, and state that the Shadow would complete it over your dead body.

Except that He would, along with as many other dead bodies as possible. And probably a broken bridge as well.

So there could be no mighty last stand, no glorious battle in which blue Fire blasts across the land like a star fallen from the sky. Sirronde smiled with brief scorn at the adolescent fantasy.

Then the smile faded. She *still* had no idea what to do, and time was running out. Sirronde thought of the storm rumbling across the landscape of her dream, ominous with its freight of lightnings, leisurely but unstoppable. Slowly, she walked back to the village.

Two mornings before the opening of the bridge came, the village was already working itself into festival mood. Sirronde had no taste for it and kept out of town, trying to work out a plan. Only late in the evening did she return, after the common room was mostly empty.

Adri stumbled in after a while, and Sirronde was shocked at the look of him. He looked bleary and tired, which she would have expected, but he was also many drinks drunk. He sat by himself in a corner and started to work on one of the pitchers of wine left on the tables for the evening trade.

Bringing her empty cup with her, Sirronde went to sit beside Adri. He looked up at her blearily, absorbed her disapproving glance, and waved one hand sadly. "This helps me sleep."

"I could have helped with that."

"Don't want to be trouble."

She reached out to take the wine pitcher away from him. Adri resisted.

"All right, be greedy as *well* as drunken," Sirronde said, and got up.

Adri pulled her back into the seat and poured out for her. Most of it went in the cup. "So you have any ideas?"

"Do I look like I have? Do you think I wouldn't have come to tell you if I had?"

"I thought maybe not." Adri looked guilty. "If she got the idea that I was up to something with you, something about the bridge—"

"Never mind," Sirronde said, not wanting him to say any more. Dyla's pride and possessiveness were beginning to annoy her—especially the latter: *as if one could try to own one's loved like a prize cow!*—and she wondered again how such a gentle soul as Adri had become entangled with her. Sirronde had seen enough couples causing one another pain, but usually other aspects offset the suffering, and always, each partner had something that the other one needed or wanted.

"Sorry, sorry," Adri said, and drank. "Oh, I *am* sorry."

A gust of laughter came from the one occupied table in the back: mercifully, no one there was paying the two of them any attention. "A sorry case altogether. I can't believe how easily I said it. 'I would give the soul out of my body,' I said, and He said, 'Would you?' and I said 'Yes.' Oh, why did I say 'yes'?"

Sirronde sighed in pity for Adri's distress, reached for her cup, and then stopped.

"Would you say that again?" Sirronde said.

"And he said, 'That might work." Adri stopped. "What?"

There is always a loophole. "Say that again. What you said."

Adri blinked. "I said, 'I would give the soul out of my body if she could just get that bridge done.'"

Sirronde swallowed. "Are you sure you said just that? Those words?"

"That's what I said. Are you deaf?"

No, but He might have been! Sirronde wanted to laugh out loud but didn't dare. It was too serious, too dangerous. She was having enough trouble keeping any smile off her face.

"All right," she said. "Adri, listen to me, and think. What if your body crosses that bridge, *but it's not your soul in it?*"

A long pause. "You can't do that!"

"Yes I can," Sirronde said. "It's been done before. Not often—it's dangerous for both parties. And bodies don't much like having their souls shifted."

"How do you do it?"

She was about to say "There are two ways—" but stopped, for the simplest of the two methods was no good. The Shadow would know immediately if she simply removed a soul from its place by force and substituted her own. The second way, the subtler way, was the only one that would be undetectable until it was too late. "Your soul is emplaced in my body for a while," she said. "For storage, as it were. And mine in yours. But yours still seems to be there, so—"

Adri was looking at her wide-eyed. "How do you do it?"

"Sharing."

"You mean like in—"

"Bed," Sirronde said, "yes."

Adri looked nervous. "Is it the only way?"

"For our purposes, yes."

A pause. "I don't know how she'd be likely to take this."

"What?"

"Me sharing. With someone else."

"You mean Dyla's ..."

"Jealous." He whispered it.

So he must bear this burden too, along with the rest of it. She was sorry for his embarrassment, but she couldn't take time to deal with it now. "Are you willing?" Sirronde said.

There was a long silence. "What if she finds out?"

"Is she likely to ask?"

"She suspects us already," Adri said, and stared at the hearthstones again.

Sirronde took a breath in surprise, then smiled ironically. "Might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. But, Adri, if she asks me once the deed's done, I can't lie to her."

"She'll be furious with me!"

"You'll be alive to be furious *at*," Sirronde said. "A great improvement on your present prospects. As for me, I've been screamed at before, and so far it hasn't been fatal." She was still bemused by this strange tangle. "But, Adri, before … was there cause for her to suspect?"

"Never," Adri said, vehement. He paused. "But you're saying … you and I will *have* to be … together."

Sirronde nodded.

Adri's expression was oddly immobile, as if he was trying to keep his face from doing something. Sirronde glanced down at the table and reached out with her underhearing, for this was important.

Excitement. No, joy.

A muddled flash of imageries. Holding. Being held.

And there it was: what Dyra would never give Adri no matter how often they shared, simply not being the type.

She doesn't mother, Sirronde had said. Now Sirronde saw that she had been entirely too acute in this regard.

Sirronde schooled her face to show nothing of how sorry for him she felt. "And I really have no choice," Adri said.

"Not if you want to save your soul, no."

A long silence followed.

"When must we do it?" Adri said.

Sirronde swallowed, her mouth going dry now that she had finally come to cold, hard planning. "The night before, no sooner. The less time I have to pretend to be you, the better. Do you think you're likely to share a bed the night before?"

Adri shook his head. "We won't be this time. If you're doing the Lovers, you normally spend the night apart, for luck. We're not supposed to meet until dawn, on the bridge. I'll be staying down at Hatch's house."

"All right. Come here after Leni closes everything up: the fourth hour after midnight. I'll wait for you outside. Then—"

Sirronde fell silent. Another gust of laughter came from the table in the back.

"Will it work?" Adri whispered.

"He'll take the soul out of the body that meets Him on the bridge," Sirronde said. "Whether He'll be able to keep it—that's another story."

"But what if He *does*?"

Sirronde swallowed. "Then you get to live out the rest of your life in a Rodmistress's body," she said, "and if I were you, I'd take it straight back to the Silent Precincts, for you have no training, and you'll need it."

"But what would happen to you?"

"That's my business," Sirronde said, trying to sound resolute, "and Hers. If I were you—" *And so I will be,* she thought, and laughed painfully. "I'd get out of here, get to bed. Act normally until tomorrow night, if you can. And I'll see you four hours after midnight, the night before."

Adri got up and left. Sirronde looked after him, her mouth dry. She drained her cup and sat for a long time looking into the fire.

The next day she went up the road to do her heartwork, getting ready for that night's wreaking.

Between those who shared, however casually, something passed that left each party forever changed. The vulnerable few seconds when one lover or both were lost in the ecstatic release of the body were also those during which that indefinable force passed free between the participants—tangling in a confusion of energies and chemistries, making lover and loved, however briefly, one being on various levels. That was the connection that Sirronde would be freezing in place, until the Shadow, deceived, reached into Adri's body to take what He thought He had won. Once He had pulled the soul out of that body, the Shadow would have both fulfilled the bargain and lost what He had bargained for. Then, if she was quick and strong enough, Sirronde could push this particular incarnation of the Shadow straight out of physicality—for a while. That was all even the Goddess could manage. *If I'm not quick enough, of course, He'll probably leave the whole valley a pile of smoking rubble.*

I'd better be quick.

The main problem remaining was that Sirronde did not know in what form He would attack if her first "push" failed. She spent the rest of the day constructing various offensive and defensive wreakings against the Shadow's second attack: delicate, prickly structures of words and intent, assembled in the dark place inside her where the Flame dwelt, ready to have a syllable or a structure of Fire inserted for quick activation. But she was all too aware that such general work tended to come apart under stress, and she would not be placing much reliance on those wreakings. In the end, this would be a matter of will, speed, and sheer Power.

Sirronde came down the mountain at dinnertime, noticing the reflected scarlet glory of sunset on the snowy peaks behind her, but not able to summon much appreciation of it as she descended into the valley. The sound of song met her. Various people of Dalthant were singing and dancing in the street, so many of them that even the pigs had left because of the racket of bombards and curlhorns. Trying not to look too depressed, Sirronde went in to have dinner.

There was no sign of Dyla or Adri—apparently tonight they were keeping to the house where they had been put up, preparing for the next day's formalities. This suited Sirronde. She spent the rest of the evening wheedling old stories of the Sender Valley out of the most ancient residents. The area was as haunted as mountains tended to be, with voices that screamed down the winds, hungry mantichores hunting on nights of no star or moon, various kinds of Fyrd and other "goblin" beasts, and endless other horrors and monsters bred out of the long winter nights. The mantichores were most on her mind. They were known to haunt high mountain places; if they had been here once, they could be here again, and the Shadow could use the memory of them. There were defenses against that—she would see to it.

At last, unable to find out anything else useful, Sirronde

went upstairs. There was no chance of her getting any sleep, both because of her increasingly nervous state and because the common room was going to be busy until well after midnight tonight. But she could at least rest, even through the cheerful noise coming up through the floorboards.

She had plenty of time to go over her planning as the hours went by, and she minutely adjusted the wreaking which would strike any physical form the Shadow tried to take. Finally, three hours after midnight, she tried to relax, but it was impossible. Her nerves were tuning up for what she was about to do, intent as if the whole world rested on this one problem.

Of course, for one person, it did. *Naturally, I have to treat the problem as if it were my whole world, a source of ultimate terror. And lesser ones. How difficult for poor Adri to share under circumstances like this, with someone who only days ago was a stranger, and he doesn't know what the consequences might be. Why, what if I—*

Sirronde's eyes widened.

What if I get pregnant?

Within moments she dismissed the idea. For a Firebearer, it was the matter of a minute's work to convince one's body that it was already pregnant, and unable to become more so.

But that wreaking required attention to hold it in place, and Sirronde was going to need all her concentration for another wreaking far more important. If *that* one slipped somehow, both she and Adri might die, or something worse might go wrong.

Well, forget the wreaking then. There's always fillbane. It grew up here as it grew all over the Kingdoms.

But fillbane tea left the user woozy for the better part of a day after taking a sufficient dose, and taking it the morning after would be of no use. *Dare I risk it?*

She started shaking, realizing that she did not. And there was the memory of the Woman with the backache, no longer Bride but Mother, who had said to her, *You'll want to ask yourself whether you're ready to take on this burden.*

This burden.

Sirronde sat bolt upright in the bed. The shivering was turning from fear to anger. *I'm too young for this! I've just gotten started! Don't I get even a few years of freedom?*

So new out of the Precincts, so young in the practice of the art, Sirronde had not thought she would need to be concerned about the fulfillment of the Responsibility for years yet. Eventually, of course, she would have turned her attention to that basic understanding of men and women in this world with the Goddess: that, once at least, twice if possible, you should offer yourself for the bearing or begetting of a child. With that Responsibility fulfilled, you might do as you pleased, find the kind of love that brought you the best joy—the freedom of many sharings, the security of a few beloved, or one—and settle in to live your life accordingly.

It's not fair! This isn't what I want! It's not supposed to be this way, it's supposed to be with your loved—

But there was another problem. *Think of Adri.* Sirronde had perceived very clearly his longing for fatherhood, and how he looked at Dyla and saw no chance of the longing being fulfilled.

Sirronde sat there sweating as if she had been climbing the Sender Pass all over again. She got up and paced back and forth between the bed and the little table by the open window.

Think of his joy, finally to fulfill his own Responsibility. He will certainly attempt that fulfillment with no one else. You see how his own fidelity to his loved keeps him trapped. Now this strange circumstance has suddenly given him a chance to both free himself of his guilt and pain and to escape this great danger which he entered into thinking only of her, of his loved.

She paused by the window, looking out at the crescent Moon, setting late. Even if she agreed to this, there would still be a price to pay. Not just time off her life, the price every Rodmistress or Fireworker knew she or he must pay for every single wreaking. Now, Sirronde suspected, if she was so proud as to take on the Shadow directly, she would pay the price the Goddess had first paid. Creation. Birth.

And I was condemning Dyla *for pride,* Sirronde thought, and ground her fists against the table, and her forehead against her fists. *Now see what's come of it.*

Outside, the maiden Moon slipped behind the mountains to the west, and things went dark as the fourth hour after midnight crept over the sill, the vulnerable time when sick people die, and when even those without the Fire dream true dreams of death and life. Down in the silent street, Sirronde heard a footstep. Quietly, she got up and went downstairs to meet Adri and bring him up.

An hour later she stood up, with some difficulty, and looked down at her body, which slept. She had built the wreaking to keep Adri's soul asleep and out of trouble inside her until the bridge was opened. If all went well, he would wake up in his own body as soon as the opening was over. The structure of the wreaking, once released, would immediately return each soul to its proper place. *And not a moment too soon,* Sirronde thought, for this body fit her soul oddly, like a pair of breeches cut too tight. Indeed the breeches were a problem, for the equipment inside them felt very peculiar, and she couldn't tell whether this was due to her own unfamiliarity with it, or to Adri's need for a better tailor.

She let out a breath and looked down at "herself" asleep in the bed. Just a small, robust, fair young woman with oddly barbered hair (good barbers being sometimes hard to find in the Waste). But odd it was to see herself there, clearly, not in the muddled reflection of a puddle or some piece of polished metal. Nonetheless, it had all gone better than she had expected. She lifted a hand to the cheek where Adri had touched her, with surprising tenderness, when he had first come in. Well, not to *that* cheek.

The confusions were only going to multiply until she got this over with. She picked up the Rod laid aside on the table, then changed her mind. *I'll leave it here.* The Shadow might notice it,

and in any case, she would not need it for what she would do today. Sirronde slipped the Rod under the pillow and went quietly out into the gray light before dawn.

High in these narrow, hemmed-in valleys, dawn was when the rays of the Sun could start to be seen streaming up through the mist hanging about the nearest peaks. As Sirronde, in Adri's body, walked alone down the dusty street toward the river, she heard the sound of talk and laughter ahead of her and judged that the whole town must be down there already, except for a few children running past her in that direction. Someone down by the river was blowing experimental notes on a bombard, and annoyed cows bellowed in response to the strangled hoots.

Sirronde didn't hurry, mostly because Adri's body didn't walk the way hers did, and going slowly was the only way to keep her own soul and mind from so successfully asserting their own preferences that she fell down in the street. She swallowed. Even *that* felt strange. And then she swallowed again, for as she came around the curve of the road, there they were, the whole of the village, maybe two hundred people, waiting by the riverbank, at the foot of the bridge.

Finished, it was beautiful, even with the scaffolding still up, a graceful curve binding the two sides of the river and the road together. But Sirronde's mind was more on those people—old and young, men and women and children, who, if she was not very careful, might be killed over the course of the next half hour or so. She tried to keep a smile on her face as she walked steadily among them, on the dusty road, and through and past them, up to the bridge-pillars on her side. There she paused, looking at the carved figures, handsome and serene.

"Go on," someone whispered from behind her. "She's ready."

Sirronde went up onto the bridge.

Its paving stones had purposely been left rough, to give good purchase for carts, and Sirronde stumbled once on the way up the curve. It was less steep than it looked. The white limestone blocks of its side walls gleamed dully in the growing light. And suddenly Sirronde found herself looking across the remainder of the span at Dyla, climbing toward her.

Instantly the Fire rose up inside her and ran down inside all her limbs in a shock of recognition, as Sirronde looked across the beautiful finished span, at the tall and handsome woman approaching her, and knew the presence of her Enemy.

And who else would it have been? Sirronde thought. *Who else has been making the bridge fall down, all this time? Who can do such a thing more simply than the builder?* Or, rather, the little sliver of the Shadow that lived down at the bottom of Dyla's soul, as it lived buried in every human being. Not that Dyla would have been conscious of it, any more than most people are conscious of the ways they ruin their own lives. In this case, a miscalculated stress here, a block fractionally too small there, and the setup had unrolled itself before poor Adri without fault. Again and again the bridge failed, and the Builder's terrible rage and frustration could indeed have been partially founded in the equally unconscious realization that she herself was somehow to blame.

And now, one way or another, it ends.

The two advanced toward one another, and at the crest of the bridge, its highest point, paused. Smiling, the Master-builder held her arms out gladly. Sirronde, in Adri's body, put her own arms around Dyla, and held the other fast.

And dawn gave way instantly to darkness.

Something reached into her like pincers, digging in cruelly and pulling Sirronde out of herself with horrible suddenness. Everything around her was filled with a smothering, gloating sense of satisfaction and amusement, unbreathable as smoke. *Mine!* cried a great, furious, laughing voice into the darkness. *One more of Your precious creatures, one more that You will never have again—*

—and then an abrupt screech of shock as the Fire, enraged at close contact with the One who had turned it to evil purpose long ago, blazed up like a star falling on the landscape.

Not that there was a landscape in this anteroom of reality, only an endless pale plain reaching away on all sides into infinity. Directly in front of Sirronde, a knotted formless darkness writhed in the blinding brilliance of the Fire. Sirronde leapt forward and threw her arms around Him. His icy rage at His betrayal struck straight into her bones. *Your bargain's kept,* she cried into the emptiness. *You've won, and lost. But now You have another problem!*

Darkness tried to spread and blot everything out again. With a thought Sirronde clenched it tight to her and banished it. Even just outside of reality, there were some rules. She had moved first, and there would be no grappling in darkness. She would be able to see His shapes, and all she had to do was hold on long enough to give Him a good push past reality and out the other side. In her arms the Shadow twisted and pushed and screamed—

—and changed. Huge, a strangling thing, a serpent, throwing lightning-quick coils around her throat. The Fire coiled around too, noosed around the serpent's neck, drew tight.

A great hiss, then a rush of water, icy cold and tasting of limestone flour. Sirronde knew how to hold a river: be the banks. She gathered the Fire around her, wrapped it through her, and together she and it went broad and deep enough to hold any amount of river rushing. The water leapt in the banks, roaring, crashing, and down the watercourse came huge boulders, leaping, falling to crush the banks and let the river out.

Sirronde felt the boulders as they crashed down for the tiny force, multiplied uncountable times, which held a rock together and kept a stone stone. She knew the word to release that force. She cried it now, and the stones went all to flour, as pulverized as if the glacier had ground them down—

The great mass of ice suddenly loomed over her, not moving at inches per year but all at once, another kind of serpent, burning cold and crushing down on her, grinding her under. Sirronde's breath went out of her; she would have screamed with the pain but could not. The ice crushed her bones. The fury of Her enemy, whom she had dared to deceive, came down on her, pressing her into nothing—

—but her thought could still move, just. And under the ice, far under the cold stone of the mountain on which the glacier pressed, there still lived something which could stop it. Fire, the hot blood of the earth, moving, shouldering upward in a slow burning irresistible flood, shattering the stone, the cone of the building volcano starting to break the back of the glacier, its power breaking upward into the light of day—molten stone running down the mountainside from the newly outflung arms of stone, the newest lava still burning blue. Sirronde pushed herself up, half sitting, still clutching her Enemy, not letting go—

But here is something you will let go of. As she pushed to her feet again, suddenly she was back in her body once more, and it was herself she now was holding, a dark shape, but Sirronde's own. It drew her to it with a terrible empty smile. And inside it, inside her as it pressed her close, suddenly Sirronde felt the thing growing, alien, unwanted. *This is what you fought for,* her own voice said, thick with loathing and contempt. *This mindless growth inside you, which would have taken over your life, if you were to have any more life. But you will have none. You have thrown yourself away for nothing.*

Horrified, Sirronde started to push herself away—then angrily stopped. *You'll have to do better than that,* she thought. *If I've no life any more, nor the child, yet it and I will go to Her unsullied*— And then she laughed, and grappled the dark image of herself harder to her. *And it's not even in me at the moment, except in soul! Your last throw, lost Son of our Mother: are you ready? For now it ends*—

Sirronde drew all her Power together and readied the attack which would push this scrap of Him out of the world. He struggled to impose His vision on her, tried to make Sirronde see herself as He did, a little contemptible scrap of mortal muck, impotent against the One for Whom the Blue Fire had been originally intended. The Flame rose up at His bidding, and Sirronde staggered back before it in helplessness and terror as the darkness finally found the form she had been denying it—the Dark Loved in His splendor, the Murderer, deadly but still inhumanly beautiful. Those burning black eyes dwelt on her, devouring Sirronde's will, pushing her down to kneel and worship. *Who am I to dare to resist Him?* Slowly, still clutching at the arms, the burning hands, she sank to her knees, helpless and worthless, a tool already shattered. Sirronde fought for the light, losing it as one of those great hands went about her throat and began to squeeze. Her Fire, His Fire, began to strangle her, and Sirronde gazed up into the merciless dark eyes which promised nothing but death. And which now began to pale—

In the swiftly falling darkness a wet, slobbery breathing began, the awful sound of something trying to breathe with a beast's lungs through a monstrous half-human face. Its eyes glowed, the terrible blankly luminous eyes which men chisel out and call mantichore sapphires after the beast itself has been turned by light to stone. The moment this was over, this darkness would burst outward through the door she had been unable to defend, and the mantichores would come after it and come real—the terrible children of the darkest night, which was now about to fall. Nothing would survive in Dalthant, not the people or the bridge. Through her dimming vision she could just see the door opening onto reality, the bridge over the Sen faint in dawn light, the dawn about to be drowned in darkness—

One of Sirronde's hands still clutched His, at her throat. The other she released, and reached up into the darkness falling inside her for the wreaking she had left faintly flickering and ready there—seized the structure of it, like a handful of thorns, gripped it desperately until she bled fresh Power, and thrust it up into His changing, half-beast face.

With a roar the blue-white column of lightning came streaking down from the lowering darkness above, and struck them both. Burning, blinded, Sirronde was blasted backward, thinking, in a last moment of irrational satisfaction, *If I must die, at least I didn't let go until then. I win!* Gasping for air, she pushed herself up to her hands and knees in just enough time to see the deepest blackness, caught halfway between man's and mantichore's shape, struggling helpless in the blast of light. Screaming in frustration and fury He went, as the lightning, having come in a flash into the world, in a flash went out of it again …and took Him with it.

Sirronde staggered and suddenly found herself looking at Dyla. For no more than a second—then the other wreaking which she had left in place took effect.

She blinked, and had to rub her eyes before she could see properly. She was in bed in her room up at Leni's, and from about a mile away, she could hear a sound of cheering and clapping, and the bombard being played again, badly, so that the cattle out in the fields began moooing in distress.

Sirronde let out a long, exhausted breath, and smiled.

It was another half hour before anyone noticed she had not been at the bridge. When Leni came into the commonroom to start setting out the first of the food for the celebration, she looked at Sirronde with surprise, sitting there pale and shaky-looking by the window. "Are you all right?"

"I don't feel very well," Sirronde said: "I could have had too much to drink last night. How did it go?"

"Why, very well," said Leni, going to the hatch-window at the back to find Sirronde a cup and a pitcher of barleydraft, "though a lot of folk think perhaps poor Adri was up late

pining for his lady." She threw Sirronde a look inviting her to support or deny this statement. "He stumbled after they hugged each other."

"But he's all right?"

"Oh, he's fine. Laughing like a child with joy. You'd think he'd built that bridge, not her." Leni put the cup down, poured for her. "Though I must say she was looking at him oddly afterward." She shrugged. "You'd think she'd be happy when it didn't fall down again."

Sirronde drank, keeping her thoughts to herself. Leni didn't get a chance to say much more, for the crowd had come down the street all together and now filled the place, demanding food and drink. In amongst them came Dyla and Adri, who sat down and suddenly found themselves in front of more drink than they could have managed in a tenday. The press and crowding of happy people hid them from view, but not before Sirronde managed to catch Adri's eye and nod once.

He did not have to smile outwardly. She could feel it right across the room.

Sirronde drank her draft, musing, untroubled by the noise and celebration around her. When a shadow fell over the table, she knew who it was before looking up. Dyla's face was oddly set.

"I wonder," the Master-Builder said.

"So do we all," Sirronde said. Ever since arising from the bed, she had been dealing with the first physical intimations of that new something inside her. It was a marvel, and not even Dyla's presence could distract her from it. *My daughter ...*

"I wonder what Adri was doing last night," Dyla said, her frown growing blacker.

"Building bridges?" Sirronde said, and laughed softly. "For what's a life but a span? And a brand new one, too."

Dyla looked offended. "Don't think to hide the truth from me by riddling. It's well we're leaving shortly, or I'd soon make you mind your own business."

Sirronde was looking idly at the hand that had last bled Fire in the darkness. She clenched it closed, glanced at Dyla and up on the mountain. From inside some passing, drifting cloud, thunder softly rolled.

"I think," Sirronde said, "I prefer minding Hers." Even when it's frightening. *Even when it takes me down a road I never thought to walk.*

Dyla gave her a cold look and went away, leaving Sirronde sitting alone, wearing an obscure and joyous smile.

The next day, as the scaffolding was being taken down, Sirronde stood at the Dalthant side of the bridge. She had leaned there a good while, not doing anything obvious. But her hand rested on her Rod, and the Fire ran down invisibly into the earth and through it to the bridge, questing through the structure of it. There were no concealed weaknesses, no misplaced stresses. It would stand. It was not that she did not trust her Enemy to keep His word, but there was no harm in being sure.

"It truly is beautiful," she said aloud then, having felt Adri come up behind her.

"It is," he said. They both looked over at where Dyla was supervising the removal of the scaffolding, oblivious to them.

"Any problems?" Sirronde said.

"She's furious with me." He gave her a wry look. "And I'm alive to be furious at."

"What will she do, do you think?"

Adri let out a long tired sigh. "Probably make my life difficult for a long while," he said. "But she's been doing that even when she's not furious."

Sirronde breathed out, a sound of slight amusement. "So you'll be heading back up to Prydon in a couple more days. What will you do?"

"Stay with her," Adri said. "After nearly paying a price like that for love of her, I intend to take long enough to see if it was really worth it. And what will you do now?"

"Maybe go home," Sirronde said. "Well, I have the better part of six months before getting around will really be a problem. I can do a lot of work between then and now. And then ..." She shrugged. "I'll name our daughter."

The smile he turned on her was very small, but utterly astonished and delighted. "You know already?"

"When you have the Fire, it's hard *not* to know."

His smile faded somewhat. "Life with Dyla being what it is," he said, somber, "I may not be able to come to see her. But if you would tell her who her father is, tell her about me."

"I will. I'll find a way to send you word privately."

"Thank you. I always—"

"I know," Sirronde said, and turned away.

He swallowed. "I wish I didn't have to—"

"Stop," Sirronde said. "Your loved is your loved. All this that happened here was for love of her. Don't make it worth less. Dyla may not know how lucky she is, but Someone else does. And eventually, when She comes to share Herself with you, as with every man and woman alive, She'll tell you so."

"Excuse me—"

Sirronde looked at him.

"I think She already has," said Adri.

Sirronde was silent. Then she touched his cheek, just once, and as quickly as she decently could, went up the bridge and over it, northward, and into the next nine months before the rest of her life.

Diane Duane has held only three jobs in her life: psychiatric nurse, writer's assistant, and SF-and-fantasy writer. She has spent the last twenty years in that last position, producing fantasy and science fiction in various forms — novels, short stories, television, audio and radio, computer games and comics — and presently holds the curious distinction of having written for Star Trek in more different forms than anyone else alive.

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THE SILVER FLAME
Tostyn Alaerthmaugh

Who needs the Bat Cave? This mercurial wyrm has the most fascinating lair in the North.

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by Storn Cook

BEST KNOWN AS "THE SILVER FLAME" FOR HIS spectacular swoops and banks in the air above the traderoads of the North, this young adult, male mercury dragon often features in the "current clack" of the Sword Coast because he wants to be in the center of everything important. Tostyn is curious, proud, and reckless, often charging into encounters with older, larger dragons, archmages engaged in spell-battle, and similar perils. He flies into and out of rages quickly, holding no grudges and considering no one a lasting foe. His every attitude, belief, like, and dislike change as often as the northern winds.

Tostyn has shown more gallantry than most other living dragons—and more open, roaring laughter. Lighthearted and enthusiastic by nature, he spends his time dashing about the Sword Coast North and can often be found in the vicinity of Waterdeep. "Stealth" is not a word he understands; when he's not dancing or looping across the skies, he's diving playfully at creatures on the ground or streaking along dodging treetops, executing corkscrew aerial rolls as he hurtles along near the ground.

More than any other known dragon, Tostyn cares nothing for the future; plans and food stores and building up treasure hoards don't concern him. He spends his days plunging into a succession of fresh delights, helping adventurers tear apart a ruin here, chasing some raiding wyverns there, pouncing on a pirate ship over here, then dodging among the storm clouds. The Silver Flame remembers beings he's met before (and particular powers or abilities he's seen them use), but he hates only those he's seen use poison or magical deception to bring misfortune to others, those who exhibit viciousness or cruelty, and those who greet him with treachery.

Until spells were put in place specifically to drive him off, Tostyn made quite a habit of "crashing" the country parties of Waterdhavian nobles. He still attends those he can slip into while in human form (thanks to a magical pendant he possesses), but he has learned not to grandly assume his true form during the revels; the spells that guard against his arrival act when he reveals his presence, blasting him from all sides. Such onslaughts have caused him enough painful crash landings to dissuade him

from taking his true form within sight of the city of Waterdeep.

Tostyn Alaerthmaugh is a strong flyer and aerial acrobat, as well as a good mimic. He seems to have a natural gift for sensing deceptions, disguises, and "when things aren't right." His sense of humor and restless enthusiasm define Tostyn; setting traps and considering consequences aren't for him.

He's the boldest of an overlarge brood of dragons birthed by the gigantic, venerable mercury dragon Thmaughra, on a huge island far to the southwest of Evermeet. Thmaughra's brood soon proved too large for the wild beasts of the isle to sustain. (The island has few metallic ores and has been grazed heavily by generations of dragons, until forage for only a half-dozen or so was left.) So Tostyn (his surname means "son of Thmaughra" or, literally, "Acknowledged hatchling of many in not the first brood of Thmaughra, male of her blood"), the most bored of the brood, took wing eastward in search of new lands to explore. The way was long, and he would probably have perished by drowning after becoming too weak to fly, but he caught a favorable storm wind and rode it for many, many leagues. He then chanced upon a large, abandoned ship drifting on the waves and rested atop it until he was ready to fly on. Chance brought him to Ruathym and then ashore south of Neverwinter, where he roamed the North until he stumbled upon possibly the best lair any wyrm of the North can boast.

Tostyn Alaerthmaugh's Lair

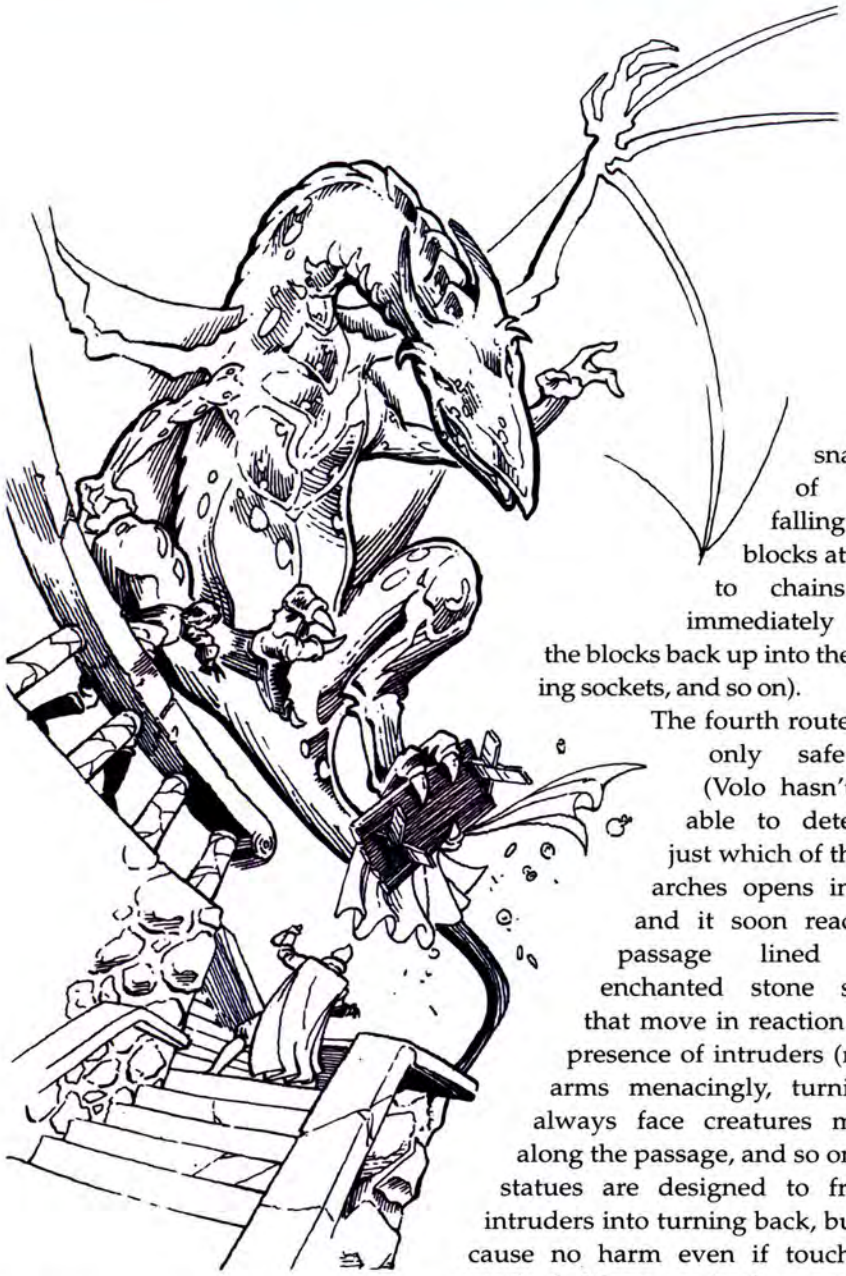
The Silver Flame lairs in the depths of the Everlake, at the heart of the Evermoors, but spends little time at home.

Tostyn made his lair where he discovered a "hole" in the waters at the heart of the lake: a magical shaft of air in the water, where magic keeps an invisible column of air free of the damp, offering an entrance to a mansion beneath the muddy lake bottom.

This nameless abode was probably once the home of a powerful Wizard (it was simply bristling with magical wands and defenses, most of which Tostyn has left unaltered), but it was long abandoned when the Silver Flame discovered it. He found a "control amulet" that allowed him to command the enchantments of the mansion, tore apart some of its interior walls to give himself room to move about in comfort, and made himself at home. Today, that amulet is hidden somewhere in the lair, and its location is known only to the dragon.

Tostyn tries never to enter the shaft of air when there are creatures nearby to see him (and usually flies over the Everlake looking for humans or other beings on the shores of the lake before plunging into his lair). However, flocks of birds flying across the lake often unintentionally find the lair; from time to time an unseen spell in its depths comes to life and sucks fresh air down the shaft, swirls it around, and drives out stale air (which then comes shooting up the shaft as the suction ends). Small flying creatures could well find themselves making an unexpected journey either up or down the airshaft. At least one adventurer employing a *fly* spell discovered the lair in this way, but fled from its depths without investigating beneath the lake bottom.

Several spectral creatures have managed to deliberately steal into the lair and survive their visit; Volo assembled a fragmentary picture of its interior from their accounts. The shaft enters the lake bottom, descends for 80 feet or so, and then curves to rise up again some 20 feet, emerging into a large entry chamber. Six "gargoyle golems" await here;



they'll attack any intruding creature who isn't Tostyn or accompanied by him, pursuing as far as the "safe passage" (see hereafter). They know the nature and precise locations of traps beyond their chamber and avoid them at the last instant, giving no sign of breaking off pursuit or preceding tentatively until they reach real danger.

Four 60'-high archways in the walls of the entry chamber open into high and wide passages that run straight into the rock, fanning out like the fingers of a human hand for several hundred yards before beginning a succession of bends, right angles, and archways. Three are "false" ways that wind through a succession of mechanical traps (blades that snap out of walls, falling stone blocks attached to chains that immediately draw the blocks back up into their ceiling sockets, and so on).

The fourth route is the only safe one (Volo hasn't been able to determine just which of the four arches opens into it), and it soon reaches a passage lined with enchanted stone statues that move in reaction to the presence of intruders (raising arms menacingly, turning to always face creatures moving along the passage, and so on). The statues are designed to frighten intruders into turning back, but they cause no harm even if touched or attacked. Many are broken and have been strapped together with metal bands, or have been propped up on stone blocks; they are ancient relics salvaged from a Netherese ruin elsewhere. Between each pair of statues, a door is set into the wall; all of the doors are huge, 40'-high ovals with barbed points protruding from their centers, like so many giant spike-bossed shields. Almost all of the doors are false; just one can be made to open, swinging on counterweights so that even a lone halfling can operate it. The bosses on all of the fake doors are really wands, and they fire at any intruding creature that moves two doors beyond the real one, unleashing cold, lightning, or paralysis effects for as long as any living creature remains "beyond" the real door.

The "safe passage" behind the real door forks; one branch leads to a chamber heaped with Tostyn's "treasure," and the other rises to a sleeping area. The sleeping chamber almost reaches the surface; if his lair were ever flooded, Tostyn could claw his way through the ceiling to freedom, destroying a small, bare rocky islet in the process. (The waters of the Everlake would then pour into the lair through this new route.) The only feature of this sleeping chamber is a huge mound of earth covered with soft, lush mosses collected and planted by the dragon.

The dragon's treasure consists of a pile of shiny rocks (metallic ores, largely copper, destined for future meals); a much larger pile of items Tostyn deemed "junk" when he rearranged the lair to meet his needs—mainly broken furniture and rotting scraps of fabric, but there are many vases, stools, and the like that possess minor (perhaps even powerful) enchantments. Their soft glows give the room an eerie appearance and light enough for any intruders to see what floats above the treasure: a gigantic brain trailing ten tentacles beneath it, its parrotlike beak opening and shutting soundlessly from time to time. This is a dead grell preserved, held aloft, and animated by magics already in place when Tostyn first entered the underlake mansion. It has no powers or sentience, is not undead, and reacts to intruders only by turning to face them and working its beak. The Silver Flame considered it trash and brought it here from elsewhere in the mansion; the purpose for which it was enspelled is now lost and unknown.

There are a few unfinished "digging chambers" opening off the passage that climbs to the sleeping area. These rooms have been left unfinished, ending where digging for future expansion was obviously proceeding until an abrupt halt. Tostyn uses these to house his slowly-growing collection of trophies. Accounts vary as to which things are in what rooms, but the contents are known to include magical automatons (mainly various sorts of golems), "devices" (grinding gears from a horse-powered

mill; a siege tower; the broken remnants of a gigantic—over 300 feet across, when whole—orrery depicting the movements of known celestial bodies in Realmspace; the steering vanes of a crashed Halruaan skyship; and so on), vessels (ships, wagons, and aerial craft the dragon has pounced on and captured), and other oddities.

This last category is known to include the following items: a levitating, upright, massively armored metal "lich's coffin" from Tashluta that Tostyn has never been able to open (he still isn't sure of the contents); the complete, intact skeleton of a green dragon encased in clear, thick, articulated glass akin to the armor worn by warriors of Nimbral; a mummified beholder, still on the human-sized throne Tostyn found it slumped on, with all sorts of curious-looking wands, rods, and hoselike things clipped to a frame that encircles the grand seat; and an enchanted net that holds together a drifting, chiming collection of glass spheres, each one holding a different body part of a slain, bloodless male human in robes with one of his severed hands still clutching a wand, and his torso clad in robes worked with winking stars.

A rather tattered "dragon disguise" designed to be strapped onto a giant or titan, who could then operate the false wire-and-silk dragon wings, claws, and tail by means of long rods (like a marionette) has also found a home in Tostyn's lair. Another curiosity consists of a massive, 10'-long stone pedestal with four arching arms reaching up from its sides to hold aloft above it a small, round stone slab. Three apparently identical clusters of controls, each consisting of raised stone studs made to fit the four spread fingers of a human hand, run down one edge of the table. Tostyn brought it hence from a shattered, abandoned wizard's tower somewhere in the Spine of the World mountains because of his interest in a fading note, which the dragon brought along. (It lies on the main slab, weighted down with a rock.) The note reads: "Ringforge; Netherese? Enchants *rings of spell storing* in upper tray when a proper creature is drained of life on main slab. Plain rings of any metal work, but instructions lost. Creature possibly draconic or undead." Tostyn has never attempted to find the lost instructions or experiment with the controls; he simply wanted such a device hidden away in his keeping, not out where some overly clever Wizard might decide to experiment with its powers on a certain mercury dragon.

The Silver Flame doesn't bother to bar or conceal the doorless arches of these rooms, and enough of their contents are still magically animated to give the appearance of ongoing life and activity.

Tostyn Alaerthmaugh's Domain

Domains mean nothing to the Silver Flame, but he's (just) thoughtful enough to avoid blundering into the faces of larger, older dragons. It never enters Tostyn's head to respect any peculiar notions of ownership creatures may have, beyond a lair. After all, are there visible boundaries in the air, on the waves of the sea, or on the land itself? (Not counting the various, puny man-made walls and markers.) Of course not—and neither should there be. Tostyn flies where Tostyn wills.

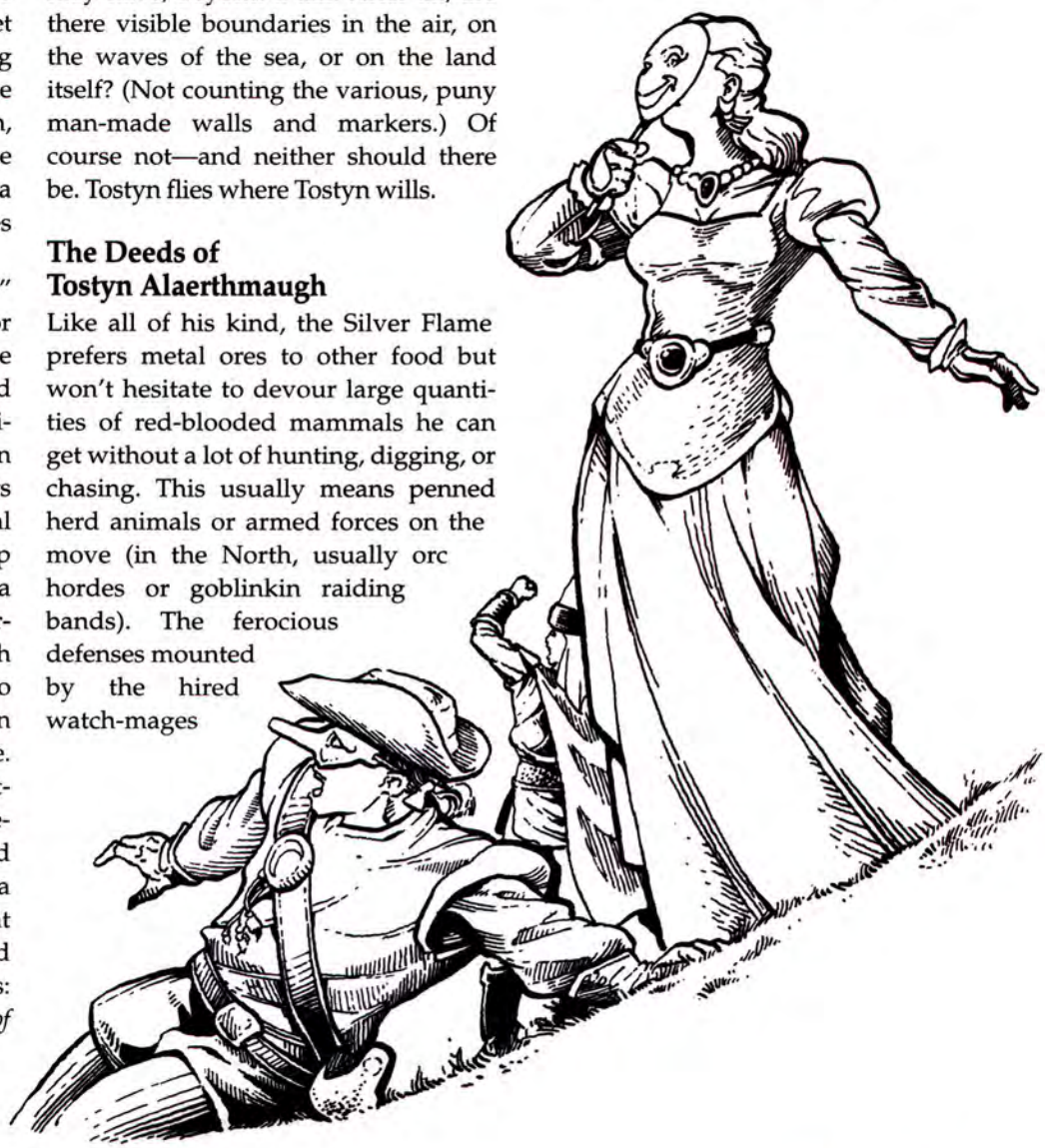
The Deeds of Tostyn Alaerthmaugh

Like all of his kind, the Silver Flame prefers metal ores to other food but won't hesitate to devour large quantities of red-blooded mammals he can get without a lot of hunting, digging, or chasing. This usually means penned herd animals or armed forces on the move (in the North, usually orc hordes or goblinkin raiding bands). The ferocious defenses mounted by the hired watch-mages of Luskan and Mirabar have dissuaded Tostyn from swooping down to snatch trade-bars or forge-ingots (though he still dares to make dead-of-night pounces on ore-barges away from harbors). Sometimes he also seeks out mine tailings and crumbling mountainsides in search of raw ore.

Beyond these needs, Tostyn Alaerthmaugh devotes his time to avidly pursuing whatever entertainment presents itself, dashing across the North on the trail of his latest enthusiasm. He shows little interest in either fighting or befriending other dragons, let alone forming alliances or mating.

Tostyn Alaerthmaugh's Magic

Though he has come to possess several spellbooks of age and interest, the Silver Flame as yet can only use the most paltry of their magics. In practice,



he casts but a handful of fairly common spells, employing mainly healing magics and *mending* spells his adventures (and misadventures) make necessary. Of more interest and importance to adventurers having contact with him are the magical items he employs.

The control amulet for Tostyn's lair isn't detailed here, as Volo was able to learn nothing about its appearance or apparently extensive powers. The Silver Flame is known to wear a *ring of the ram* and the pendant detailed hereafter, which he recovered from the skeletal remains of its maker on a mountaintop somewhere in the North.

Chassabra's Pendant

Crafted by the long-ago sorceress for whom it is named, this piece of jewelry appears to be a delicate diamond-shaped piece of polished copper, chased with a design of three closed, long-lashed human eyes set in a triangle (one eye below two side-by-side eyes), and hung around a small-linked necklace chain. The enchantments laid on the pendant render it terrifically strong and nonmetallic (it's no longer affected by magnetism or spells that work on metal, and it is no longer a conductor of heat or electricity) and make it automatically alter to fit a wearer. This fit can't be altered by any magic (i.e., the *pendant* can't be made to strangle its wearer, or grow larger and fall off) and has never been known to fall off on its own or be broken by even deliberate weapon attacks.

When donned, *Chassabra's pendant* mentally communicates its powers to its wearer, who may activate them by silent force of will alone. Powers awaken almost instantly, but only one can be in use at a time; "turning on" one extinguishes another. The exception to this are the three automatic, always-functioning powers of the *pendant*, which enable the wearer to see invisible creatures and objects and bestow *feather fall* and immunity to *magic missiles* on the wearer.

The *pendant* has one power that can be called upon four times per day, each occasion lasting 1 turn (or less if willed to end earlier, or if another power is awakened): *faerie fire* as the spell, hue as visualized by the wearer, centered on the pendant when manifesting, but stationary; it doesn't move with the pendant.

Chassabra's pendant has one power that can be awakened three times per day: *dimension door* as the spell, affecting the wearer or a touched person, but the "destination" is as the wearer desires.

The *pendant* has one power that can be awakened twice per day, each occasion lasting four hours (or less if willed to end earlier, or if another power is activated): *polymorph self* (when ended, the wearer "fades" back into prior form over 1 round, though this change doesn't delay functioning of other pendant powers).

The *pendant* also has one power that can be awakened only once per day: *regenerate* (this functions as the Priest spell but affects the wearer only and does its work in 1 round, regardless of whether damaged limbs or body parts are present, touching the body, how many body areas are to be made whole again, and so on; it's complete regeneration that banishes all open wounds and restores all lost or missing body parts, unfortunately without affecting weariness or restoring lost hit points).

In all cases of *pendant* powers, assume that "one day" equals any continuous twenty-four-hour period, regardless of when the sun rises or sets. In other words, once the *regenerate* power affects the wearer, twenty-four full hours must elapse before that power can be successfully awakened again; attempts to call on it earlier don't work, but don't impair or delay its future functioning.

XP Value: 16,000 **GP Value:** 80,000

Tostyn Alaerthmaugh uses the *polymorph* power of *Chassabra's pendant* often to visit revels and gatherings (usually nobles' parties in Waterdeep) in human form; he loves to flirt, gossip, and mix with exciting folk who have interesting things to say or dreams and schemes afoot.

Tostyn Alaerthmaugh's Fate

The Silver Flame is not likely to reach a happy old age; he takes too many chances to flourish in a region of winter weather, where the inhabitants include periodic orc hordes and such perils as the other dragons described in earlier "Wyrms of the North" installments, the Brotherhood of the Arcane in Luskan, and Cult of the Dragon agents that keep growing in numbers, reach, and hunger.

If luck favors him at critical moments, however, he may live long enough to leave his mark; he combines more energy than any ten other dragons of the North with keen wits and a growing understanding of human society and intrigues (particularly in the Waterdeep area). When his restless dabbling in human schemes and affairs grows either more prolonged or more effective, Tostyn will begin to make formidable foes—and be approached by others to become an ally. These relationships might enmesh him more deeply in human affairs, and it's likely that although he'll always be a capricious dilettante, the Silver Flame will also begin to enjoy "doing something that matters." The right adventuring band or power group could steer his considerable energies toward achieving their own goals, from destroying the outposts of their enemies to kidnapping, rescuing, or harassing individuals. Tostyn already knows that Wizards have spellbooks and magical items that interest him; he'll need little persuasion to attack Wizards he takes a dislike to (those who attack him, for instance). As for Tostyn's own fate, Elminster suggested that an old Northern saying applies: "A good war arrow can shake a realm, or even sweep it away, with but a single well-aimed flight ... but if that strike comes in a time of war, against an armored foe, that strike tends to be hard on the arrow."

Ed Greenwood agrees with the writer Anthony Powell: books do furnish a room. Now, if he could just find another forty-six rooms in his house ... Perhaps another circuit of peering into the very backs of all the closets. After all, it's worked before.

Rogues

PC Portraits

by Jim Crabtree

When it comes to drawing rogues, Jim Crabtree feels he has an advantage. Many of the characters you see here came from sketches made at conventions and embellished with touches from characters in his own game.

Creatures of Parthoris

From the computer to your game table, here are new horrors from the world of *Heretic II*.

by
Daniell Freed

illustrated by
Raven Software

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PARTHORIS IS A LAND FILLED WITH CREATURES, both predator and prey. Some are natural predators that, in a time of need, hunt nearly anything they deem an appropriate source of food. Others are plague-infested horrors who were once normal people before the effects of the plague drove them mad with pain and disfigurement. No matter the source of their aggression, all of these creatures make great adversaries for any AD&D® campaign.

Parthoris is the setting for the newly released computer game *Heretic II*. The lands and people of Parthoris have suffered many hardships: war, famine, and now a terrible plague. In the most recent war, Parthoris fought the minions of D'sparil. D'sparil, one of the three Serpent Riders, brought his army of brainwashed slaves into Parthoris and quickly vanquished all opposition. Only the Sidhe elves (also known as high elves) managed to hold off D'sparil for long, but even their mighty armies couldn't keep him in check forever. Soon, they too were forced into hiding.

From the ranks of the Sidhe rose Corvus, a great hero. Raised in the occupied streets of Silverspring (dubbed "The City of the Damned" by its few inhabitants), Corvus grew up hating D'sparil and all of his minions. Hardened by a life filled with strife and turmoil, Corvus lashed out at D'sparil's forces until he discovered the location of D'sparil himself.

After a fierce battle, Corvus killed his hated foe, but not before he himself was banished to the Outer Worlds. Corvus has not been heard from since.

After decades of peace and prosperity, the plague struck the unsuspecting masses of Parthoris. The plague has many forms, each with its own strange effect on the people of the land. The most common effect of the plague is madness. This disease causes such extreme pain that it drives its victims insane. Most of the infected act rabid, attacking almost anyone they see. No one knows where the plague came from, but plague spreaders have started appearing in even the smallest villages. They spread the foul fumes of the plague everywhere they are found.

Dan Freed is not a creature of Parthoris but one of Wisconsin, a somewhat less frightening land.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate to subtropical forest
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary and bands
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8–10)
TREASURE:	Incidental
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1–10
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	10
HIT DICE:	2
THACO:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d4 (or by weapon type)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	30% chance for spellcasting
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5' tall)
MORALE:	Low (5–7)
XP VALUE:	65

From a distance, a plagued sidhe elf looks ordinary, if somewhat disheveled and unclean, but a moment's observation makes it obvious that the plague victim is anything but normal. Their clothing is generally ripped and torn, their hair is wild and unkempt, and their skin is shallow and sunken as if they were starving. Even worse than this is the gruesome appearance of their skin. Every plague victim's skin has become mottled with welts and sores, and their color has changed from the normal fair complexion of an elf to a gray-green hue.

Most of those infected by the plague are changed emotionally as well. Once infected, they immediately begin to go through the physical transformation that causes them immense pain and suffering. Even when this metamorphosis is complete, the plague carrier experiences tremendous pain. Some can endure the pain for a short time, but most are driven insane by it almost immediately.

Combat: The plague madness drives its victims to attack almost blindly. Often they are encountered writhing in pain, wishing for an end to their misery. Other times they blindly attack inanimate objects in a hallucinatory rage, but as soon as they see an unplagued person they turn and attack the new target with anything they can grab: table legs, broomsticks, or conventional weapons. Armed with a weapon, they rush into combat, fighting until they are reduced to half of their original hit points or less, at which time they generally attempt to retreat. Oddly enough, plague sidhe seldom see another plague victim as a threat; the plague madness only drives them to attack the healthy. Despite their madness, they always turn to attack a plague spreader over all other enemies. Somehow, they are able to remember that these creatures are responsible for their current misery.

The sidhe elves are a magical race, so there is a good (30%) chance that a plague victim retains the ability to cast spells. Most plagued spellcasters can cast spells up to 3rd level as 5th-level Wizards. The most common spells used are *magic missile* and *invisibility*.

When slain, plague sidhe often burst into a green cloud of noxious plague fumes (25% chance of this occurring). The vaporous cloud fills a 10' × 10' area; anyone caught in the cloud must make a saving throw vs. poison to avoid contracting the plague. Even if the saving throw is successful, those caught in the mist suffer 1d6 points of damage from the noxious effects of the mist. Once infected, the victim slowly wastes away over the course of 1d4 hours, until he finally goes insane from the pain. Making a successful Constitution check every 2 hours can delay the onset of plague madness, but once a victim fails to resist the effects he can never regain his lost sanity without powerful magical intervention. A successfully cast *cure disease* spell removes the plague from the infected, but even this does not prevent the victim from becoming infected again in the future.

Habitat/Society: Plague sidhe can be found anywhere elves are found. They are most common in elven cities and villages that have been overcome by the effects of the plague.

Ecology: Plague sidhe are created beings and do not occur naturally anywhere. When infected, their life is all but over, and they lose the ability to procreate. Since its first appearance, the plague has appeared in various places around Parthoris with increasing regularity. The appearance of a plague spreader is always a sure sign of a breakout of the plague. While the disease has varying effects on the different races, the effects described here are the most common.

Plague Spreader

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any populated region
FREQUENCY:	Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11–12)
TREASURE:	Incidental
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil

NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	6 + 1
THACO:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Plague globes, plague mist
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	20%
SIZE:	M (6' to 7' tall)
MORALE:	Elite
XP VALUE:	2,000

Plague spreaders are the harbingers of misery and death. Standing over six feet tall, the spreaders are a fearful sight. Their skin is tinted an unhealthy pale blue. Most spreaders carry on their backs an ample supply of plague-filled globes that they use as grenades. All of them also carry a receptacle filled with liquid contagion that they use to spread the plague. A complex array of organic tubes extends from their backpacks and under their arms, plugging into a nozzle under their hands.

Appearing in populated locations throughout Parthoris, plague spreaders infect almost everything they encounter. Many people have begged the spreaders for mercy, but the spreaders never give the slightest acknowledgement as they go about their work, either to each other or to their victims. The very nature of the plague almost guarantees the death of any that contract it; its effects quickly decimate cities that have been infected.

Combat: While not primarily combative creatures, spreaders are easily capable of defending themselves when attacked. They are strong and skilled fighters, capable of attacking with their clawed hands as well as with their plague vapors.

The primary goal of spreaders is to infect everyone that they encounter with the plague. They accomplish this by hurling plague globes at their victims or attacking with the plague mist that they spray through the tubes under their hands. Globes are thrown like any other grenadelike weapon. Once a globe is broken, mist spreads out covering a 20'-diameter area; anyone caught inside the mist must make a successful saving throw vs. poison to avoid being overcome with the plague. Even if the saving throw is successful, those caught in the mist suffer 1d6 points of damage from the noxious side-effects. A spreader can be found carrying 1d6 globes at any one time. Spreaders can also spray a cloud of plague vapors out of the tubes in their hands. The mist is projected in a 50' × 20' cone. The spray can be used four times per day.

Once infected, the victim slowly wastes away over the course of 1d4 hours, until the infected victim finally goes insane from pain. Making a successful Constitution check every two hours can fight off the plague madness, but once a victim fails to resist the effects, he can never regain his sanity short of using a *wish* or *heal* spell. A successful *cure disease* spell removes the plague from the infected, but even this cannot cure the insanity or prevent the victim from becoming infected.

Habitat/Society: There is no formal society of plague spreaders. They are solitary creatures commanded by an unknown master to spread the vile plague to all that they encounter. Occasionally, they work together in small groups. On even rarer occasions, they can be found working with other creatures to achieve similar goals. They are hated by all of their victims and avoid anyone infected with the plague madness.

Spreaders are intelligent beings; despite their normally mute demeanor, they are capable of speaking or learning almost any language. It is their casual indifference that allows them to ignore the pleas of their victims.

Ecology: Plague spreaders are created creatures. They were once normal men, but through terrible sorcery they have been infused with the plague and mutated into their present forms. Spreaders never age, but they have also lost much of their free will. They are compelled through their creator to continue their quest to infect all living creatures with the plague. Only through the death of their master can they be freed from the terrible curse they carry.

Parthoris Gorgon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate/tropical
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Family
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Semi- (2–4)
TREASURE:	Incidental
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1–10
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	24
HIT DICE:	3 + 1 (5 for pack leader)
THACO:	17 (15 for pack leader)
NO. OF ATTACKS	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8 bite or 1d12 leap (1d12 bite or 1d20 leap for pack leader)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Leap attack
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S (3' to 4' tall; 6' tall for pack leader)
MORALE:	Average (8–10)
XP VALUE:	120 (175 for pack leader)

Parthoris gorgons resemble small dinosaurs; the absence of any front appendages is the most obvious difference between them. The legs of a Parthoris gorgon are suited perfectly for jumping great distances, up to 30 feet horizontally and 10 feet vertically. This ability is ideal for closing in on unsuspecting prey quickly. Most groups of Parthoris gorgons are led by a larger pack leader that has proven himself to be the strongest and most capable hunter of the group.

Combat: Parthoris gorgons attack by biting their prey with their extremely sharp teeth for 1d8 points of damage (1d12 for pack leaders). When hunting a larger animal (or person), a Parthoris gorgon tries to hide some distance from the target and wait for it to approach within leaping range. Once the prey is within range, a Parthoris gorgon uses its powerful legs to leap onto the target's back, attempting to disable the surprised quarry as quickly as possible.

The most effective attack a Parthoris gorgon has is its leap attack. A typical Parthoris gorgon can leap up to 20 feet to attack in this manner, while a Parthoris gorgon leader can leap 30 feet to initiate this attack. When leaping to attack, the Parthoris gorgons strike their target with both claws and with their teeth. A successful strike with this attack inflicts 1d12 (1d20 for a pack leader) points of damage and knocks down most targets (saving throw vs. breath weapon to remain standing). When used by a pack against a single target, this attack can quickly immobilize nearly anything.

To be the most effective, Parthoris gorgons hunt in packs led by a pack leader. The pack leader, using barks and grunts, directs the rest of the group to surround the victim and coordinates attacks. Once surrounded, the pack attacks using their combined numbers to bring down a victim quickly. If a pack leader is killed during an attack, the loss demoralizes the rest of the pack, requiring an immediate Morale check at a –4 penalty; failure indicates that the remaining pack members retreat immediately.

Habitat/Society: Parthoris gorgons are ruthless hunters that live in packs, similar in society to a pack of wolves. Packs are made up of male and female Parthoris gorgons, as well as the young of the family. The pack usually consists of 20% males, 60% females, and 20% young. When hunting, the entire pack is expected to participate in the kill, including the youngest Parthoris gorgons. When a Parthoris gorgon becomes too old to hunt, it is left by the pack to die alone in the wilderness.

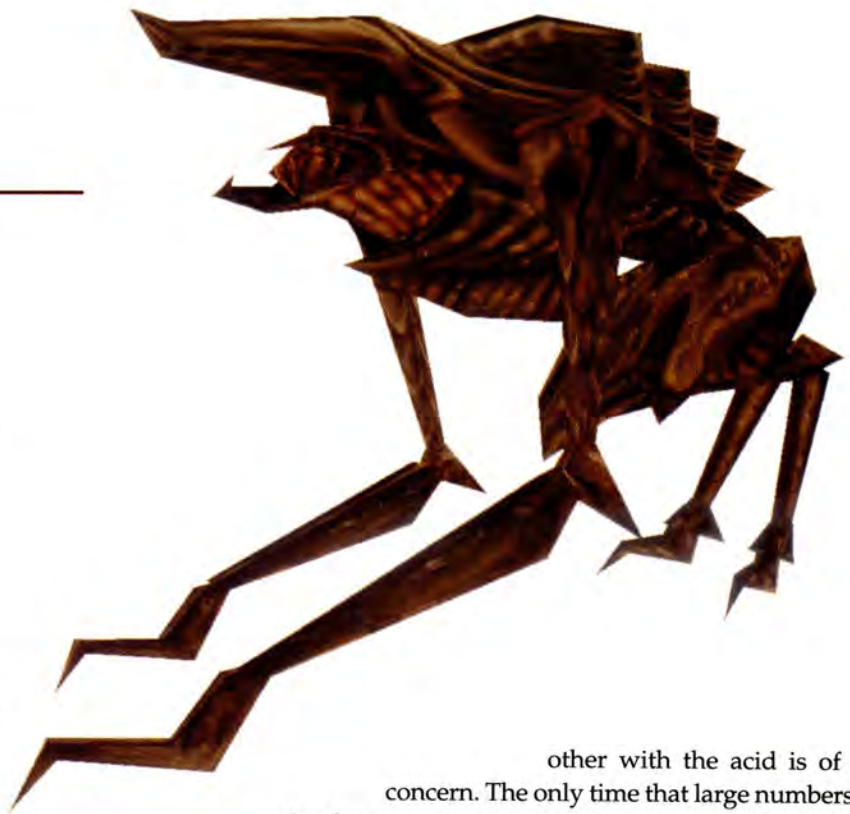
Parthoris gorgon packs hunt nearly anything to feed their voracious appetites, including humanoids, demihumans, and humans. Typically, they hunt only targets that they outnumber or that they feel they can take down easily; only when they are extremely hungry do they attack a larger or more dangerous group.

Ecology: Parthoris gorgons live in any temperate or sub-tropical regions. In climates that reach below freezing temperatures, they migrate to warmer climates during the colder months. In many mountainous regions, the Parthoris gorgons live in the warm subterranean passages below the mountains during the cold months, assuming that the caverns contain enough life to keep them fed during the winter.

G'grokon

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Subterranean/deserts
FREQUENCY:	Common
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	J, K, L
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1–4 (6–24 in nest)
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	2
THACO:	19
NO. OF ATTACKS	2 (5)
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6/1d6 or 1d4(X5)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Acid spit
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to acid
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S
MORALE:	Average
XP VALUE:	65



G'grokon are large insectlike creatures, usually the size of an average dog. They have four legs, unlike insects, and a hard carapace that provides excellent protection. Their heads are covered by a protective plate that shields them from flying predators. Sharp mandibles extend out from their lower jaw, allowing them to tear and consume flesh in a single, savage motion. G'grokon are capable of moving fairly quickly, and they can find steady footing on almost any surface because of the sharp hooks on their feet.

Combat: A g'grokon only attacks for two reasons: when it is threatened and when it is hungry. Like most insects, g'grokon are not normally aggressive except when it comes to food. A g'grokon's normal strategy when it attacks is to stay away from its prey to avoid being attacked itself, while spitting small packets of digestive acid. They can attack from as far away as 10 feet with this tactic. A g'grokon can spit five globules of acid per round for 1d4 points of damage each. If each of these successfully hit their target, they can cause a devastating amount of damage. The acid is corrosive to any flesh or metal targets. Any metallic targets struck (armor and weapons, for example) must make a successful saving throw vs. acid or be ruined. Once a target has been hit several times by the acid, the g'grokon moves closer and kills the target by attacking with its claws. When they've made a kill, the creatures devour their prey or, on occasion, drag the carcass back to their lair for later consumption.

If encountered in groups, the g'grokon use their larger numbers to their advantage. Several of the creatures hold back from the target and spit at them, while the rest charge into close quarters with the target and attack with their claws. Because they are completely immune to the acid they spit, hitting each other with the acid is of no concern. The only time that large numbers of g'grokon are encountered is in or near their nests. When near their nest, g'grokon always fight to the death. (No Morale check is needed if they are near their nests.) If by some means the female in a nest is killed, the other g'grokon go into a frenzy. In this state they blindly attack everything, including each other, until nothing is left alive.

Habitat/Society: The g'grokon are lowly, nearly unintelligent creatures. They exist only to eat and breed. They are mostly found alone when outside their nest, but when in or near their lair, there are usually several males and a single female present at all times, as well as a variety of corpses in various states of decay. A loose hierarchy exists in the nest that revolves around the single female g'grokon. She is protected at all costs if the nest is threatened.

Ecology: G'grokon can be found in nearly any warm or subterranean environment. They thrive in either dry desert wastelands or the damp confines of a natural cavern. They roam away from their nests, hunting sometimes several miles from their homes. Victims have been dragged as far as three miles after being slain. G'groken chitin makes an excellent substitute material component for *jump* spells, and their acid glands are highly sought, fetching 100 gp or more when removed intact.

Parthoris Harpy

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any except arctic
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Family
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal (1)
TREASURE:	R
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1–4
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	3, Fly 18 (D)
HIT DICE:	3
THACO:	17
NO. OF ATTACKS	3 (claw/claw/bite) or 1 (dive attack)
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6/1d6/1d8 or 2d8
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M
MORALE:	Average (8–10)
XP:	120

A Parthoris harpy is a small dragonlike creature. They have two limbs and a set of wings that provide strong if not terribly agile flight. A Parthoris harpy's legs are ill suited for anything other than standing, but its claws are sharp and nimble, used for grasping and carrying pretty much anything a person could carry. Parthoris harpies are strong enough to carry a 150-lb. carcass back to their nest to feed their young. The Parthoris harpy's wings are six feet or more across when fully extended. This immense wingspan is what gives them their great strength; their wings make them capable of hovering for several minutes at a time.

Parthoris harpies' heads are long, with stiff horns projecting from the top of their scalps. Their snouts are elongated, and their mouths are filled with razor sharp teeth, easily capable of tearing meat from their victims' bodies.

Combat: Harpies are intelligent hunters, and they are not afraid to attack fully armed prey, especially when several Parthoris harpies are encountered together. Once prey has been identified, the Parthoris harpies fly high above their targets' heads; when they have reached a sufficient altitude (usually 60 feet or more), they tuck their wings and dive. Just before reaching their victim, they extend their claws and rake them across their prey's head (or whatever portion of the body is exposed). After this initial strike, they continue to attack by climbing and diving repeatedly, until their victim is confused and wounded. Once they feel that their prey is suitably incapacitated, they hover over the target and lash out with claws and teeth until the prey falls dead.

Habitat/Society: Harpies are sociable creatures, living primarily in small family groups that hunt together. These groups seldom exceed four or five individuals, not including the young. The family groups are communal, and there is no clear leader or social structure, although male and female Parthoris harpies have different responsibilities. The females are expected to tend to the young for several weeks after they are hatched; during this time, a female Parthoris harpy never leaves the nest and goes to any length to protect the nestlings. When there are no nestlings to protect, the females participate in the hunt. The male Parthoris harpies are the primary hunters for the family group. They must return sufficient food to the nest to feed the females and the young they watch over.

Living primarily in deserts and swamps, Parthoris harpies are well suited for the harshest of warm weather conditions. Young Parthoris harpies are forced to mature quickly if they are to survive in these climates. They are capable of flying only a few weeks after hatching, and they start to hunt with the family after six or eight weeks.

Ecology: Nesting sites are always at the highest point in the family's hunting territory and are seldom covered. They consist of open nests large enough for the entire family. The height of the nest is of the utmost importance, because from these heights the Parthoris harpies can see for great distances across their hunting territory. This allows them to spot potential prey long before the unfortunate target is even aware of the Parthoris harpies' presence. There is almost always one Parthoris harpy in a nest. Only in the most desperate of times does the entire family leave home. Parthoris harpies seldom abandon one nest to build another.

Haunting Melodies

After his watery rescue by sirens, Sorrel spent his life trying to duplicate the unearthly beauty of their songs.

by James Wyatt

illustrated by Bob Klasnich

SORREL'S TREASURY OF HAUNTING MELODIES, also known as *The Midnight Book* because of its deep blue leather cover, is unusual even among magical tomes. Though it contains the expected mystical formulae and arcane scrawlings, its pages are dominated by musical notation, for the spells it contains are all musical in nature.

The tome is credited to the Song Mage Sorrel, though his name appears in the book only in the title of one spell, *Sorrel's dirge*. The attribution of the book may derive from tales of Sorrel's haunted personality. He is said to have gained his magical powers after being rescued from drowning by sirens, and his life was spent in an effort to recapture the beauty of the sirens' song. This quest led both his music and his magic down unusual avenues, pushing them beyond the realms of ordinary earthly experience. It is fitting that this compendium of unearthly tunes bears his name.

Between the staves and notes that form each of the *Treasury's* thirteen spells, the author theorizes at length regarding the effects of music on the human mind as well as the natural and supernatural worlds. The spells themselves offer concrete, if macabre, examples of these theories. Each involves music, either vocal or instrumental, as an essential component.

These spells are well suited for spellcasters with musical tendencies, like the Spellsingers of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. In a RAVENLOFT® campaign, many of these spells are especially appropriate for the wolfwere Bards of Kartakass. Many of these spells are most effective in the hands of NPC spellcasters, and several are restricted to Evil characters.

Many of these spells require the use of a musical instrument (and the appropriate nonweapon proficiency), which serves as a material component for the spell. The instrument is never consumed in the casting of the spell, however.

PRIEST SPELLS

Chant of Dark Summons

(Conjuration/Summoning)
Sphere: Summoning
Level: 4
Range: 30 feet
Components: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: Special
Area of Effect: One or more creatures
Saving Throw: None

This dangerous intonation calls forth creatures of darkness to perform the caster's bidding. As the name implies,

the caster must chant for the entire duration of the spell. The spell lasts as long as the caster is able to maintain the chant. The chant itself has three parts.

The first part, the invocation, reaches to the Lower Planes and issues a summons to a type of tanar'ri determined by the caster's level, as shown on the table below. The caster can choose to summon a less powerful creature than he is entitled to. This first part of the chant lasts 1 turn; the summoned creature arrives at the end of that time. If the chant is interrupted at this point, the spell dissipates without effect.

Caster's Level	Tanar'ri Summoned
7–9	2d6 manes
10–12	2d4 dretch
13–15	quasit (imp)
16–18	rutterkin
19+	alu-fiend or cambion

Note: Quasits are from the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*™ book; the other tanar'ri listed are described in the *PLANESCAPE*® *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM*® *Appendix*, Vol. 1.

The second and longest part of the chant performs a binding that forces the summoned creature to remain on the Prime Material Plane and also contains the caster's instructions to the creature, which it must obey. The summoned creature fights for the caster as well as performs more menial tasks. Creatures with innate *gate* abilities may be asked to use them, but the gated creatures are not under anyone's control. The second part of the chant lasts as long as the caster desires. The caster cannot perform any other actions while casting, except to move at half his normal movement rate. If the chant is interrupted during this time, the summoned creature is freed from the caster's power and usually attacks the caster.

The final part of the chant forces the summoned creature back whence it came. This part of the chant lasts 1 turn. Again, if the chant is interrupted before this part is complete, the creature remains in the Prime Material Plane and is free to act as it chooses, usually with disastrous consequences.

Chorus of Wrath

(Enchantment/Charm)
Sphere: Combat
Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: Special
Area of Effect: All singers
Saving Throw: None

To cast this spell, the caster must have companions or servants of the same alignment who are willing to lend their voices to the magic. The additional singers need no magical or musical training; the spell itself forms the words and notes as long as the singers are willing participants and of the same alignment as the caster.

The effects of the spell depend on the number of singers who participate, including the caster. Singers receive a bonus to their attack and damage rolls equal to the number of singers participating, up to a maximum of +4. Furthermore, as long as at least three singers are participating, all members of the *chorus* are immune to any form of magical or natural fear. In addition, all combatants who are not participating in the *chorus* suffer a –1 penalty to attack, damage, and Morale rolls. With five or more singers, the chorus members are immune to any Enchantment/Charm spells, and the penalty to nonparticipants is increased to –2.

Danse Macabre

(Necromancy)
Sphere: Necromantic
Level: 7
Range: 0
Components: S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: 50' radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

This ghastly, limping melody, also known as the *dance of death* or *totentanz*, unleashes a wave of negative energy

Haunting Melody Results

Level or Hit Dice	Normal	Ravenloft
1–3	Geist or Phantom	First-magnitude ghost
4–6	Poltergeist	Second-magnitude ghost
7–9	Haunt	Third-magnitude ghost
10–12	Spectre	Fourth-magnitude ghost
13+	Ghost	Fifth-magnitude ghost

in the area of effect. All living creatures within a 30' radius of the caster must successfully save vs. death magic or be transformed into undead. Plants simply blacken and wither in death. Normal animals become animal skeletons or zombies; 0-level humans and ordinary humanoids are transformed into skeletons or zombies. Monsters become monster skeletons or monster zombies, at the DM's option. Player characters and higher-level NPCs either become zombies, or if the RAVENLOFT® *Requiem* rules are available, may be transformed into higher forms of undead.

Use of this spell is unequivocally evil. In addition to a musical instrument, the material component is a vial of wraith essence consumed in the casting.

Haunting Melody

(Necromancy)
Sphere: Necromantic
Level: 7
Range: Touch
Components: S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 4
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: Neg.

This fearsome spell, cast at the moment of a human or humanoid's death, prevents the creature's spirit from leaving the Prime Material Plane for its final destination. The spirit becomes a poltergeist, haunt, geist, or ghost, depending on the creature's level or hit dice. See the table above.

The caster gains no control over the spirit and, in fact, may be faced with an angry ghost when the spell is completed. A successful saving throw vs. death magic (made as if the creature were still alive) prevents the spell from gaining its hold on the creature's spirit, allowing it to leave this world in peace.

Nocturne

(Invocation/Evocation)
Sphere: Sun
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: S, M
Duration: 1d4 hours + 1 hour/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 50' radius
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a globe of shadow in a 50' radius around the caster. Illumination within this globe is equivalent to a clear, moonlit night. Any light source brought within this globe has its radius of illumination halved. Creatures of darkness, including orcs, drow, and vampires, suffer no penalties while within this sphere.

In addition to a musical instrument, the material component for this spell is a sunflower petal smothered in ink.

WIZARD SPELLS

Eerie Piping

(Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 5
Range: 0
Components: S, M
Duration: 9 rounds
Casting Time: Special
Area of Effect: 90' radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

To cast this spell, a Bard or Wizard must have a flute or a similar wind instrument, such as a recorder, ocarina, or panpipes. The instrument serves as the spell's material component but is not consumed in the casting. The ghostly melody created by this spell bears little resemblance to the sound of any earthly flute. It has no discernable source and sounds so haunting that it strikes fear into the heart of its listeners.

The effects of this spell build gradually over a period of 9 rounds. Listeners may make a saving throw every round (in the RAVENLOFT setting, you may use a Fear Check), and once they have succeeded, they are immune to any further effects of the spell.

The spell effects are as follows:

Round	Effect
1	Victims are uneasy and nervous, suffering a –3 penalty to surprise rolls.
2	Victims are shaken, suffering a –1 penalty to attack, proficiency, and saving throw rolls.
3	Victims are severely shaken, suffering a –2 penalty to attack, proficiency, and saving throw rolls.
4	Victims are affected as if by a *scare* spell.
5	Victims attempt to hide from the unseen horror.
6	Victims flee in fear, moving at their maximum movement rate away from the area of effect. If they escape the area of effect, they are not further affected by the spell.
7	Victims are paralyzed in fear, unable to act or defend themselves. They suffer a +2 penalty to their Armor Class and gain no benefit from shields or high Dexterity.
8	Victims age 5d4 years.
9	Victims are scared to death.

Fiendish Fantasia

(Illusion/Phantasm)
Level: 5
Range: 0
Components: S, M
Duration: 1 round/level
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: 90' radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

This nightmarish composition plays upon the deepest, darkest fears of those who hear it, transforming the everyday world into a landscape of unimaginable terror. The victims perceive their surroundings in the same way as a child awakened from a nightmare. Inanimate objects seem to move as if alive: waving branches become groping claws, and ordinary sounds become the scratches and titters of unseen creatures.

When the ordinary thus becomes horrific, the truly threatening becomes a manifestation of the victim's greatest fears. Any opponent in combat is perceived by the victim as a horrible creature of nightmare. NPCs and monsters are forced to make a Morale check, while players can be expected to roleplay their characters' response to facing such a terror. (At the DM's discretion, PCs can be forced to make a Fear Check in the RAVENLOFT setting.) The victim's fear itself can be deadly. Any successful attack forces the victim to roll a new saving throw vs. death magic or be instantly struck dead by fear.

Keening

(Necromancy)
Level: 6
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: Instantaneous
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: 30' radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

This deadly song is similar to the keening wail of a banshee. The spell can only be cast at night. Any creature within 30 feet of the caster must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic or fall dead. Even those whose saving throws are successful must make an additional saving throw vs. spell (or a Fear Check) or flee in terror for 10 rounds. (At the DM's option, the results of failing this second saving throw can be the same as failing a Fear Check.)

Melody of Madness

(Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 5
Range: 0
Components: S, M
Duration: 7 days
Casting Time: 7
Area of Effect: 90' radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

To use this spell, the caster plays a short but insistent melody on a string or wind instrument. The magic of the spell forces the melody into the minds of those who hear it, where it repeats over and over again, driving the victims to the brink of madness. A saving throw is allowed when the spell is first cast. Those who make the saving throw suffer no effect from the spell. (In the RAVENLOFT setting, the DM may use a Madness Check instead of a saving throw, although the effects of the spell are the same.) The magic of the spell lasts for seven days, and victims receive a new saving throw every day, with success freeing them from the spell's effects. With each successive failure, the madness grows more severe, as shown on the following table:

Day	Effect
1	Victim is dazed, suffering a –1 (–5%) penalty to all die rolls.
2	Confusion increases; penalty increases to –2 (–10%).
3	Victim is affected by a *confusion* spell; roll for effects every three hours on the table in the spell description in the *Player's Handbook*.
4	Victim is affected by a *confusion* spell; roll for effects every hour on the table in the spell description in the *Player's Handbook*.
5	Victim becomes schizophrenic, suffering wild mood swings that amount to a random shift in alignment every four hours.
6	Victim becomes incapable of speaking or understanding any language.
7	Victim lapses into a catatonic trance from which nothing can arouse him. He sits motionless, the driving tune of the *melody of madness* pounding through what is left of his mind. Only a *heal* or *restoration* spell, or the psionic power of *psychic surgery*, can restore the victim to health and sanity once he has progressed this far.

In addition to a musical instrument (not consumed in the casting of the spell), *melody of madness* requires a live burrowing beetle or worm as a material component.

Nightmare Lullaby

(Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 2
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: 5 rounds
Casting Time: 3
Area of Effect: One creature
Saving Throw: Special

When cast upon a sleeping victim, this spell causes dark nightmares. Under ordinary circumstances, the nightmare causes the victim to awaken with a start, and forces the character to make a System Shock roll with a –25% penalty. Failure means that the character is deeply disturbed by the nightmares and suffers a –1 (or –5%) penalty to all rolls for the next twenty four hours.

Casting this spell in conjunction with an *ESP* spell, the caster can manipulate the victim's nightmare, ensuring that specific images remain burned into the victim's memory for the remainder of the day. When faced with something that resembles those nightmare images, the penalty applied to the victim's die rolls is doubled, to –2 or –10%. For example, the caster might use *ESP* to insert his own face into the victim's nightmare. Later in the day, faced with the spellcaster in combat, the victim's lingering terror intensifies, and the penalty is doubled.

Siren Song

(Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 3
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: Special
Casting Time: Special
Area of Effect: 90' radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

This powerful enchantment is cast by means of a melodious tune of unearthly beauty. Those who hear the caster's song and fail a saving throw vs. spell, are entranced by the melody and do not the caster as a source of danger. As long as he remains singing, the caster appears to be a messenger of beauty, completely harmless and beneficent.

Like an *invisibility* spell, this enchantment is broken as soon as the caster takes any kind of offensive action. Listeners entranced by the *siren song* are automatically surprised by the caster when he chooses to attack, but as soon as he attacks, the spell ends for all listeners.

Sorrel's Dirge

(Enchantment/Charm)
Level: 4
Range: 0
Components: V or S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: Special
Area of Effect: 90' radius
Saving Throw: Neg.

This gloomy melody, which can be sung or played upon an instrument, breathes such an air of sorrow that it causes despair in all those who hear it. Listeners who survive the experience have described it as "the very sound of death." Victims who fail their saving throw while in combat must make an immediate Wisdom (or Willpower) check. Failure indicates that the victim has lost all instinct for self-preservation and is unable to act, even in self-defense, while the spell remains in effect. The character makes no effort to defend himself, and attacks against him gain a +4 bonus. He automatically fails all further saving throws, as he makes no attempt to avoid any ill effects.

Success at this Wisdom check allows the character to channel his despair into a violent rage, attacking with a +1 bonus to hit. The enraged character suffers a +2 penalty to Armor Class and gains no Armor Class bonus for high Dexterity.

Outside of combat, a character affected by *Sorrel's dirge* initiates no action, preferring to be left alone. He stands or sits perfectly still or wanders aimlessly unless forcefully led to do otherwise. If his companions try to urge him into a course of action, he can attempt a Wisdom (or Willpower) check at –2, with success indicating that he musters the energy to do the requested task, though he still does it listlessly and without interest.

The effects of the spell last only as long as the caster continues to play or sing the melody. The caster can take no other action during this time, except for moving at up to half his normal movement rate. He gains no bonus to his Armor Class based on high Dexterity, and a successful attack on him disrupts the spell.

Singing *Sorrel's dirge* has its effect on the caster as well: for 1d4 rounds after the end of the spell (whether the caster chooses to end it or is interrupted), the caster is listless and melancholy, always acting last in a round of combat.

Swan Song

(Necromancy)
Level: 7
Range: 0
Components: V
Duration: 1 turn
Casting Time: 7
Area of Effect: 25' radius
Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell can only be cast when the caster has been reduced to 10% or less of his original hit point total. Therefore, it is rarely learned or memorized, and even more rarely cast. Nevertheless, its effects can be deadly.

When the spell is completed, necromantic energy powered by the caster's dwindling life force lashes out at every other living creature within the area of effect, causing them to lose as many hit points as the caster currently has left (or half that number, if they make a successful saving throw vs. death magic). These leeched hit points are transferred to the caster for the duration of the spell. Further damage inflicted on the caster is subtracted from his own hit points first (unlike many other spells that temporarily boost the caster's hit point total) and from the leeched hit points only after those are gone. At the expiration of the spell, the leeched hit points are subtracted from the caster once again, which could leave him dead.

James has encountered a few haunting melodies in his time: the second movement of Beethoven's 7th symphony, parts of Shostakovich's 5th, the "Dies Irae" from Mozart's Requiem and Britten's War Requiem, and some tunes that were in his head when he woke up. Thanks to Walt Disney for a "Night on Bald Mountain" he will never forget.

Jeepers!!
You're sittin' on a gold mine!

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THE DUELIST
PRICE INDEX

*A complete guide to selling and trading **Magic** cards.*

Tools of the Trade

From daggers to keys, a Thief now has a few more tricks up his sleeve.

by Mike Ferguson

illustrated by Jim Crabtree

THIEVES CAN USE MANY OF THE MAGICAL ITEMS in the AD&D® game. However, few of these items are specifically tailored to aid a Thief's more illicit skills (burglary, sleight of hand, etc.) Also small in number are the magical items designed to thwart a Thief's abilities. While rare, such items do exist, and for some rogues they have made the difference between wild success and utter disaster.

The following magical items are usually found in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, mostly in the Dalelands region. While most members of a Thieves' Guild in the Dalelands do not possess any of these items, they know what they are and roughly how to use them. Most Guilds have one or two of these items in their possession at any given time, and may be persuaded to "lend" them for a considerable fee.

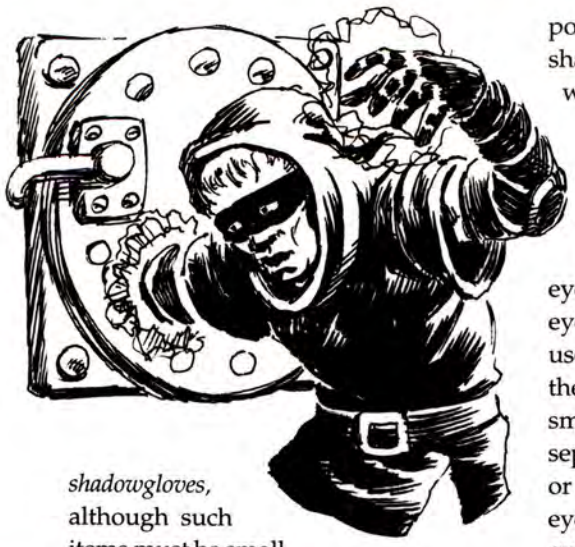
The Harp of Screams

This magical harp is carved from expensive wood into the shape of a dragon. The dragon normally clutches a tiny red gemstone (worth only 2–4 gp) in its fangs. If the gem is removed from the dragon's mouth, the harp suddenly becomes a small but powerful magical alarm. Anyone who passes within a 10' radius of the harp and then leaves without playing a certain note on the harp's strings causes the dragon's head to shriek. This loud and painful sound can be heard up to 500 feet away. The only ways to stop the shrieking of the dragon's head are to either return the gemstone to the dragon's mouth or to cast *dispel magic* or *silence 15' radius* on the harp.

XP Value: 2,500 **GP Value:** 8,500

Shadowgloves

These magical gloves are made from a thick, tough, black material. At first glance, they hardly appear to be suitable for delicate work. On the fingertips of the *shadowgloves*, however, are tiny magical fields similar to that of a *portable hole*. Three times per day, the *gloves* can allow their wearer to reach through an inanimate, nonmagical object up to 6 inches thick. Items can be removed from sealed containers by using



shadowgloves, although such items must be small enough to be held easily in the wearer's hands. Keys, coins, and gems can be removed from a container with *shadowgloves*, for example, but a longsword or shield would be too large for this task. Objects cannot exceed 1' in length and cannot weigh more than 5 pounds. *Shadowgloves* automatically change size to fit the wearer—they fit any humanoid creature from halfling to storm giant size.

Shadowgloves can get around some traps, but not all of them. They certainly allow the wearer to avoid a poisoned needle in the lock of a chest, but if they are used on a container filled with poison gas, the gloves allow the gas to escape and affect the wearer. The DM should use discretion in determining whether or not *shadowgloves* allow a player character to escape a trap.

If *shadowgloves* are placed into a *bag of holding* or a *portable hole*, the character who committed this extremely dangerous action must make a saving throw vs. spell. A successful save means that the bag/hole and the *shadowgloves* create a minor implosion that completely destroys the gloves, the bag/hole, and every item contained within them. A failed save indicates that the character is also affected by this implosion and suffers 3d6 points of damage.

XP Value: 4,500 **GP Value:** 10,000

Wandering Eyes

These magical items are usually found inside a small leather pouch. Inside the pouch are five stones carved into the shape of human eyes. One brilliant white stone—the master eye—is quite large, about the size of a human fist. The other four stones are about half the size of the white stone and are all different colors—red, green, blue, and black. When the smaller eyes are moved away from the master eye, the master eye begins to glow. The user of the *wandering eyes* can then use the master eye to see things through the smaller eyes. The smaller eyes may be separated from the master eye by walls or by magic, but as long as the master eye is within 2,000 feet of the smaller eyes, the *wandering eyes* still function. There is no limit to the number of times per day that the *wandering eyes* may be used, and the user may select which smaller eye the master eye is "looking" through at any time with a verbal command. ("I wish to look through the red eye now.") Infravision and spells cannot be used through the *wandering eyes*.

XP Value: 3,000 **GP Value:** 8,000

Liar's Boots

These magical boots can help their wearer evade pursuers. When activated, the *boots* change the direction in which the wearer's footprints seem to go. As the wearer walks, he must concentrate on a false direction he would like the magical trail of footprints to head. A false set of tracks is then created, heading in a new direction chosen by the wearer. When the direction of the footprints is changed, the *boots* leave absolutely no trace of actual footprints or a real trail—only the false footprints remain.

Once activated, the wearer can walk 1d6 × 100 yards without leaving a real trail. This is also the distance that the wearer can extend a false trail. The effect lasts until the boots are removed or the wearer walks farther than the 1d6 × 100 yards of effect. At that time, the false footprints disappear, and the real footprints appear along the wearer's actual trail. The *liar's boots* may be activated twice per day.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 6,000

Darkdust

The magical powder known as *darkdust* resembles coarse, gray sand. It is normally found in small black bags or pouches. Each pouch contains 1d3 doses of the magical dust.

A character using *darkdust* may throw one dose of the magical powder at a selected humanoid target within a 10' range as an attack. The *darkdust* always hits the selected target.

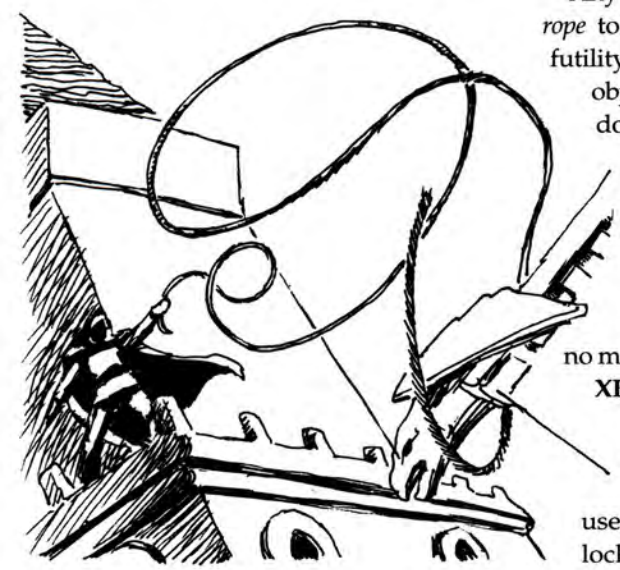
Upon being hit, the target must make a saving throw vs. spell at –3. A successful save means that the target is partially blinded by a cloud of black smoke and has a –2 to hit on all attack rolls for 1d4 rounds. Failure to save means that the target is completely enveloped in a cloud of inky blackness, is –4 to hit on all attack rolls, and automatically loses initiative for 2d4 rounds. The Blind-fighting proficiency reduces the powder's debilitating effects, and a *cure blindness* spell negates them. *Darkdust* works only on living humanoids of size M or smaller. It has no effect at all on any other sort of creature.

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 750

Ring of Dodging

This ring may be used by its wearer to help fend off the attacks of a single opponent. When activated, the *ring of dodging* allows the wearer to decrease his or her AC by 1d4 + 4 points. This effect may be used against only one opponent at a time, and each use lasts for only a single combat round. The magic of the ring only helps the wearer against one specific opponent, who must be named by the player before initiative is rolled—other opponents treat the wearer's AC as normal and are not affected by the ring. The ring can be used three times per day. Also, the wearer's opponent is allowed a saving throw vs. spell at –2. If the save is successful, the ring has no effect on the wearer's adversary.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 8,000



Ringdagger

This magical item appears to be a silver ring wrought in the shape of a dagger. By concentrating on the ring, the wearer can make the *ringdagger* change from its ring form into a *dagger +1*. The *ringdagger* retains this weapon form for 1d4+1 rounds. After this, the *ringdagger* reverts back to its normal ring form and cannot be used again until the next day. The *ringdagger* also cannot be made to revert back into its ring form before the duration of the effect expires.

The ring contains 1d6 charges. After the final charge is used, the *ringdagger* is permanently locked into a normal ring form.

XP Value: 1,000 **GP Value:** 3,000

Spider Rope

This magical item appears to be a normal piece of stout rope, no more than 10 feet long. Twice per day, however, the *spider rope* can be commanded to grow and attach itself to other items. The *rope* can grow up to two hundred feet long and can automatically attach itself to inanimate objects upon verbal command from the user. Only the ends of the *rope* can tie themselves to inanimate objects, and no more than two items can be attached to the *spider rope* at any given time. The *rope* stays in its magically altered state for an indefinite period or until the user commands the *rope* to return to its normal form.

Any attempt to manually tie the *spider rope* to another object is an exercise in futility. If tied or attached to another object without being commanded to do so, the *spider rope* automatically unties or detaches itself from that object. The *spider rope* has an AC of 8 and 15 hp. If the *rope* suffers more than 15 points of damage, it disintegrates, turning into a fine gray powder with no magical abilities.

XP Value: 1,500 **GP Value:** 5,000

Key of Disruption

This strange, magical key is not used to unlock locks but instead to lock them permanently. The *key* can automatically change its shape to fit into any normal lock. If a *key of disruption* is placed into a normal lock and turned, the lock is mystically sealed. Any attempt to pick the lock fails. Only by placing the same *key of disruption* back into the lock and by turning the *key* can the lock be restored. A *knock* spell can be used to open a door affected by a *key of disruption*. The *key* may be used once per day.

If a *key of disruption* is placed into a magical lock, that lock is completely unaffected by the *key*'s effects, but the character holding the *key* must make a saving throw vs. spell. A successful save means that nothing happens. A failed save means that the user receives a shock of magical energy and suffers 2d6 points of damage.

XP Value: 2,500 **GP Value:** 6,000

Chameleon Key

An unused *chameleon key* appears to be a large, iron key over six inches long. The only unusual characteristic of an unused key is that it has no teeth. When a *chameleon key* is touched to another key, the *chameleon key* changes size and shape until it becomes an exact copy of the other key. The *chameleon key* can then be used to open any lock that the original key could open.

A *chameleon key* retains its copied shape until its touches another key. The *chameleon key* then becomes a copy of the new key it has touched. A *chameleon key* may only be used four times. After copying a fourth key, the *chameleon key* becomes permanently locked into its copied shape. A *chameleon key* can copy another magical key but gains only the power to open whatever locks the original magical key could open, even if the lock was magical. The *chameleon key* cannot duplicate any powers of another magical key.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 5,000

Mike Ferguson has never been tracked to his hideout. He must still have a few tricks up his sleeve.

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A983

Role Models

Getting the Lead Out

Using Miniatures in Your AD&D® Campaign

By J.D. Wiker and Jim Bishop

Photos by Craig Cudnohufsky

As the AD&D® game has grown away from its wargaming roots, fewer and fewer players seem to use miniatures in their games. But despite rumors to the contrary, miniatures aren't just for wargaming, and clever DMs recognize their utility in the most important element of running a game: telling a story.

Storytelling with Miniatures

If you want to bring a greater sense of realism and accuracy to the table, miniatures are a great way to do it. Issues of positioning, such as line of sight, distance, and range are a cinch to work out with miniatures. Potentially complex encounters—like an ambush—become much easier for the DM to run and the players to visualize. The best starting point for using miniatures in tactical situations is the *PLAYER'S OPTION®: Combat & Tactics* book. It's the definitive resource for using miniatures with the AD&D combat system.

Miniatures can help even if your players prefer drama and high fantasy to charts and die rolls. Here's one example of how miniatures can turn an ordinary roleplaying event—a chase—from an exercise in predictability to a suspenseful, memorable event.

Getting from Here to There

The characters are caught outside their residence (a tavern, or maybe a ship) by a large group of orcs. The orcs aren't well armed, but there are a lot of them—too many to fight. It's time to run away.

To make matters worse, the PCs are at least lightly encumbered, so their movement is reduced by one-third or more. The characters' goal is to reach safety before the orcs catch them.

Assume that 1 inch of tabletop equals 5 feet of game distance, and set up the PC miniatures about one-quarter of the way from one edge. They're heading for the opposite edge. Now put the orc miniatures at the edge closest to the heroes—at least two for each PC, though you can choose to represent only the orcs in front if you're short on figures. (Dice, pennies, or other counters make good stand-ins for extra orcs.) Make sure the orcs are at least a foot behind the PCs, since they'll catch up quickly.

The unencumbered orcs move faster than the encumbered PCs—24 inches of table distance to the PCs' 16 inches (assuming the PCs are all taller than dwarves). A character who drops everything can probably make it to safety, while PCs who want to keep their stuff (or carry their shorter companions) must face at least some of their pursuers.

This encounter doesn't have to be fatal to be fun. It can be just as exciting if all the PCs escape. The important thing is to give the players a feeling of suspense.

Prepping Miniatures

Do those orcs have webbed armpits? Are dreadlocks coming out of their toes? This excess metal is "flash," and you don't want it. Using a sharp hobby knife, carefully whittle off any extraneous bits.

Afterward, coat the miniatures with a "wash." Mix a little black paint with water until it's about as thick as milk. Brush this mixture over the miniatures and let it dry. The wash settles and dries on the figure, emphasizing the detail. A different color wash on the heroes makes them stand out.

Tool	Approximate Price
Hobby Knife	$5
Hobby brush	$2
Black acrylic paint	$3

▲ After carefully trimming the flash from your miniatures, "wash" them to make the details pop.

Optional Rule: Map Scale

In the scenario above, each 1-inch square on the table is equal to an area 5 feet square. While this is the official AD&D game scale, here is an alternative that might work better in a miniatures-supported campaign. Simply treat each 1-inch square as 2 yards (6 feet).

A glance at the Base Movement Rates (*PH*, Table 64) reveals that PC races have a base movement of either 6 or 12. The base movement is an abstract value that converts to 120 feet per round in a dungeon, or twenty-four dungeon squares—not the easiest values to remember or to plan around if you're the dungeon designer, especially when you throw in demihuman and outdoor movement.

As you can see from the table, 2-yard squares convert PC and monster movement to round multiples of ten. It won't change your whole campaign, but it might be easier to remember.

❑ = 5'

Base	Outdoor	Dungeon
6	36	12
12	72	24

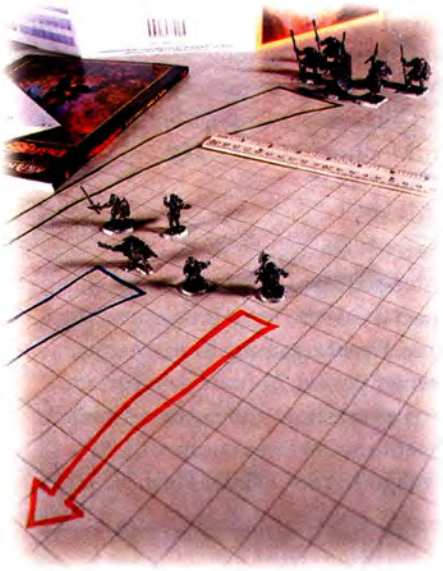
❑ = 6'

Base	Outdoor	Dungeon
6	30	10
12	60	20

Multiply the Base Movement Rate by five to determine outdoor movement. Divide outdoor movement by three to generate dungeon movement.

Though it does a nice job with movement, this scale shines when calculating ranges for missile weapons and spells. A quick perusal of the Missile Weapon Ranges chart (*PH*, Table 45) reveals that all ranges are given in yards. What's more, they're given in nice, round multiples of ten! To calculate range in squares, simply divide the listed range in half.

▲ You can use just a few figures to represent an entire horde of opponents.



▲ Ask your players to bring their own miniatures to the game, keeping your costs down and letting them pick their favorites.

◀ Altering the scale of your battlemap can make chases simpler and more exciting.

How Much Does This Cost?

For the previous encounter, you'll need a figure for each PC and at least six for the orcs. That means spending about $17 for the orcs, but your players should buy their own miniatures—unless they like their PCs being represented by bottle-caps! The figures in this article are all from Ral Partha.

Using miniatures in a campaign can become expensive; the trick is to start small. Concentrate on each new chapter in the adventure, and shop just for the miniatures you'll need. Determine exactly how many and which kind you need before you ever go to the game store. Early in the campaign, the PCs can't handle large numbers of opponents anyway, and as the PCs advance you can add to your growing orc horde piece by piece. This doesn't mean that in early games they can't encounter more than a half dozen opponents; they can fight twenty or thirty all told, if you like—they'll simply face them five at a time.

Stock Number	Description	Total Cost
02-261	Light Orcz Impalers (three for $8.50)	$25.50
61-089	Young Paladin (one figure)	$2.25
01-317	Magic User Player Character (two figures)	$5.50
11-029	Elven Thieves (two figures)	$4.00
11-031	Dwarf Fighters (two figures)	$4.00
11-027	Druids (two figures)	$4.25

When his parents were killed in a tragic basecoating incident, Jim entered the Monastic Order of Toy Soldiers and never left. JD paints at every opportunity, with whatever is at hand, which has gotten him into trouble at several barbecue rib restaurants.

Convention Calendar

FEBRUARY

DunDraCon XXIII

February 12–15 CA

San Ramon Marriot, San Ramon, CA. Events: Almost every roleplaying game in print, seminars, tournaments, miniatures, painting contest, and a flea market. For more information contact: DunDraCon Inc., 1145 Talbot Avenue, Albany, CA 94706.

DFW Con

February 19–20 TX

Casa View United Methodist Church, Dallas, TX. Events: roleplaying games, miniature wargames, board games, trading card games, and seminars. Contact: DFW Con, 2374 Highwood, Dallas, TX 75228. Web: www.utdallas.edu/gbarton/dfwcon/index.html.

Winter Fantasy

February 25–28 IL

Ramada Plaza Hotel O'Hare, Rosemont, Illinois. Guests: to be announced. Events: games, seminars, demos, and tournaments including: *Magic** Pro Tour Qualifier for New York and RPGA® Network events. Preregistration: weekend badge $30, one day $12. Onsite: weekend badge $35, one day $15. Contact: Andon Unlimited, 129 N. Hamilton, Columbus, Ohio 43213. Email: andon@aol.com. Preregister online at www.andonunlimited.com.

MARCH

ConJuration 4

March 5–6 ✳

William Shatner Building, McGill University, Québec, Canada. Events: roleplaying, LARP, board games, miniatures, CCGs, movies, panels, workshops, and more. Registration: $7 (Canadian) at the door. For more information contact: McGill Gamer's Guild, 3480 McTavish St., Montreal, PQ H2A 1X9.

MegaCon '99

March 5–7 FL

Orlando Expo Centre, Orlando, FL. Special Guests: Terry Brooks and Alex Ross. Events: gaming tournaments, demos, panels, 24-hour anime room, plus an art show and auction. Contact: Quantum Cat Entertainment, 270 Orange Terrace, Winter Park, FL 32789.

CosCon 99

March 12–14 PA

Days Inn Conference Center Butler, PA. Events: RPGA Network tournaments, LIVING CITY™ events, benefit tournaments, CCGs, board games, miniatures, free-form roleplaying, dealer's area, new game demos, computer room, and movies. Contact: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16003.

Stellar Con 23

March 19–21 NC

Holiday Inn, Market Square, High Market, NC. Guests: Aaron Allston, Steven S. Long, Jack L. Chalker, Jody Lynn Nye, Sean Patrick Fannon. Registration: $15 before January 1, $20 between January 1 and March 1, $30 after. Contact: Stellar Con 23, Box 4 Elliot University Center, UNCG, Greensboro, NC 27412. Website: www.uncg.edu/student.groups/sf/stellarcon.htm.

Convention Calendar Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed.

To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and,
6. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained.

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *DRAGON® Magazine*, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: *DRAGON Magazine* does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

❖ Australian convention
✳ Canadian convention
✪ European convention
💻 Online convention

Egyptian Campaign

March 26–28 IL

Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL. Events: RPGA Network, AD&D® game, *Shadowrun**, *Battletech**, *Warhammer**, *Vampire**, *Diplomacy**, *Axis & Allies**, *Magic**, *Star Fleet Battles**, *Car Wars**, and many other board, miniature, card, and roleplaying games. Contact: Egyptian Campaign 1999, % SIUC Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425. Email: ecgamecon@aol.com. Website: www.siu.edu/~gamesoc.

APRIL

OpCon

April 24 IL

Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park, IL. Guests: Mary Francis Zambreno and Susan Van Camp. Website: http://oprfhs.org/activ/scifi/opcon.

MAY

Fantasy Fair Nine

May 9

The Cresset Exhibition, Bretton, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, United Kingdom. Events: dealer's room, demos, and fantasy dress competition. Contact: The Hallards, Eaton Socon, St. Neots, Cambridgeshire, U.K., PE19 3QW.

JUNE

Milwaukee Summer Revel III

June 10–13 WI

The Best Western Inn, Milwaukee, WI. Events: First-run RPGA Network tournaments, including LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH™, LIVING JUNGLE™, Virtual Seattle, AD&D, BOOT HILL®, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Settlers of Catan**, *KingMaker**, *Axis & Allies**, *Diplomacy*, and more. Registration: $30 prereg until Jan. 15th, $35 thereafter. Contact: Bruce Rabe, P.O. Box 779, New Muster, WI 53152. Website: www.angelfire.com/wi/summerrevel.

The Unspeakable Oaf by John Kovalic

Gamer's Guide

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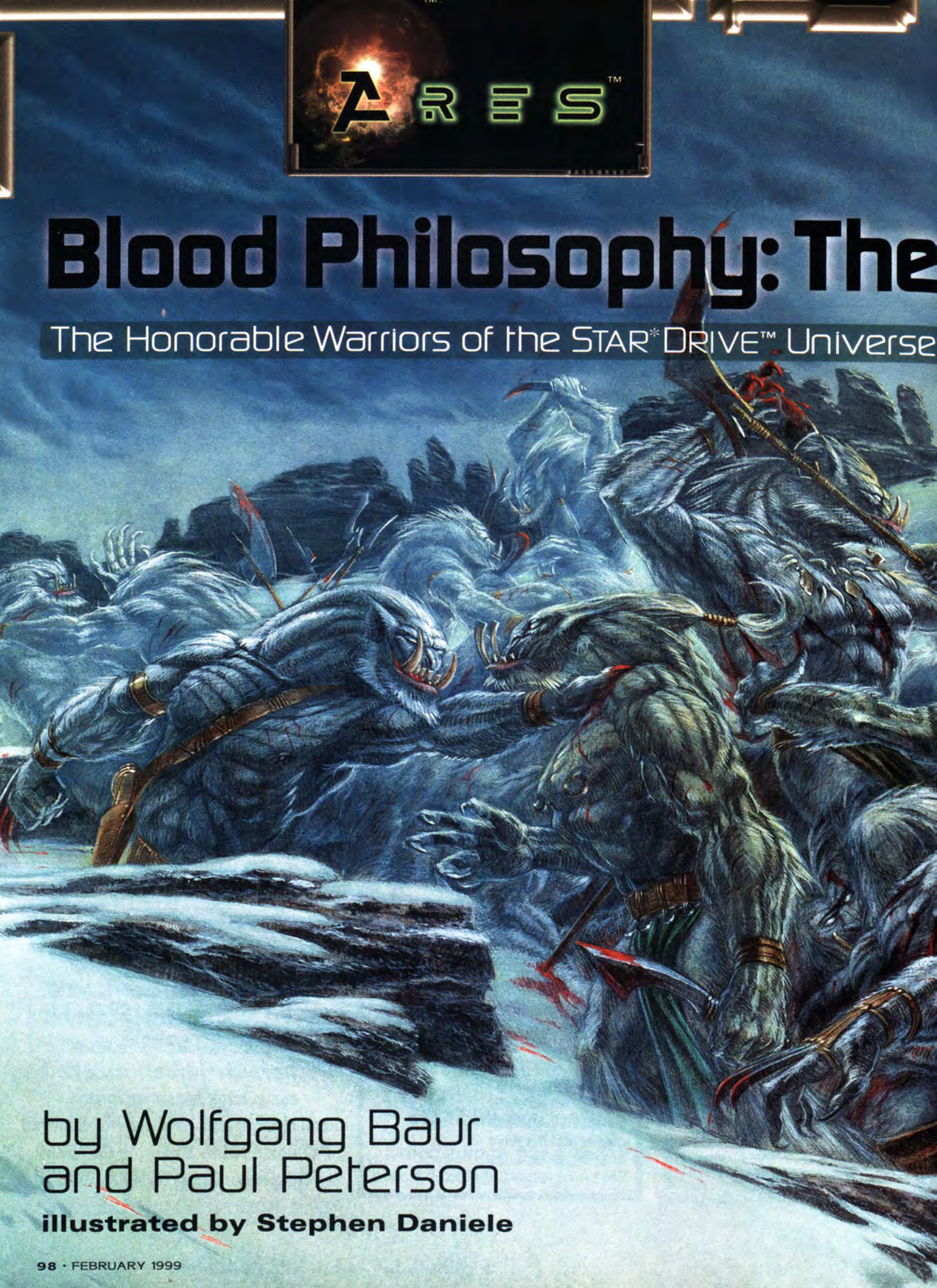


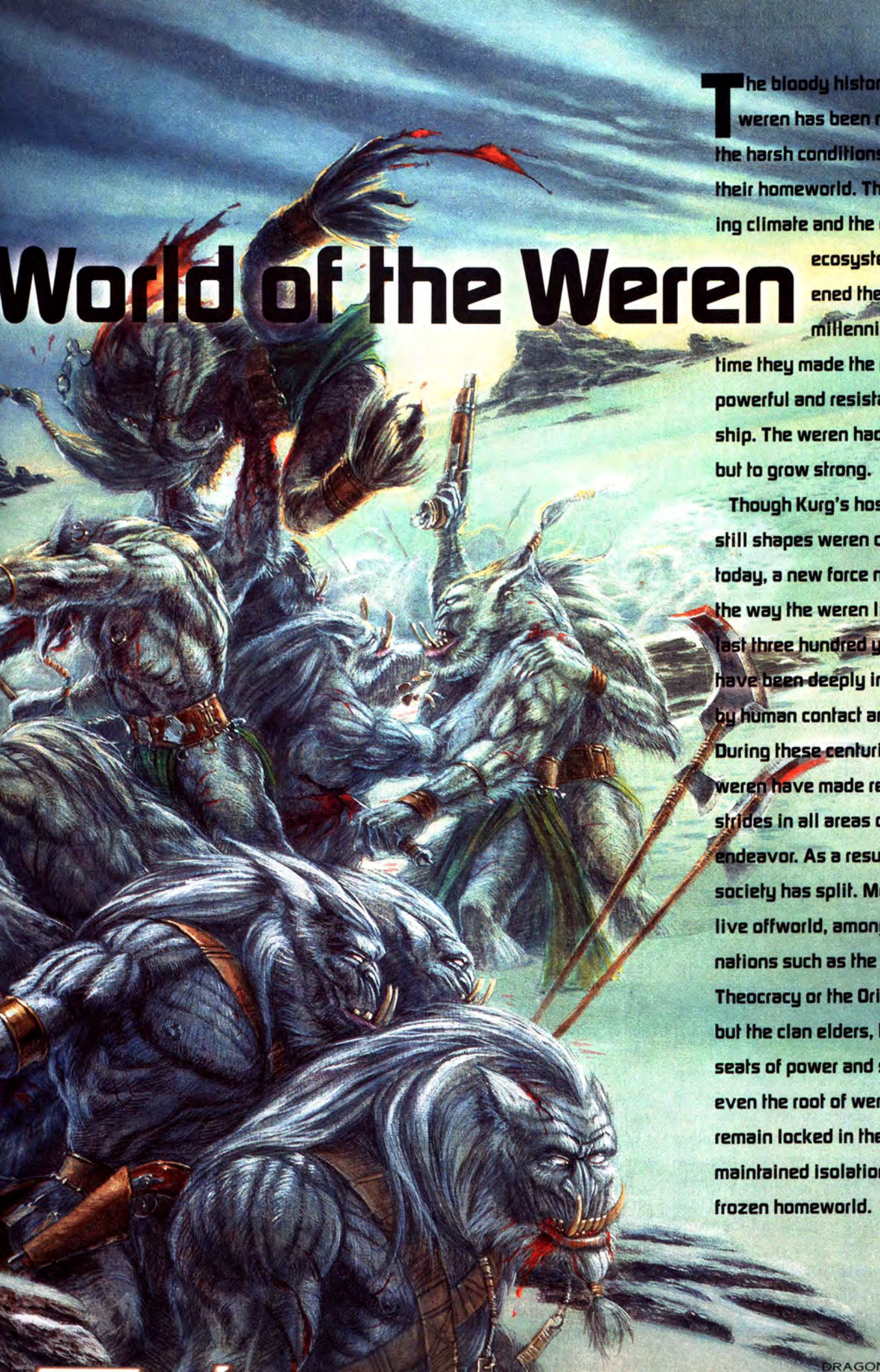
Blood Philosophy: The

The Honorable Warriors of the STAR*DRIVE™ Universe

by Wolfgang Baur
and Paul Peterson

illustrated by Stephen Daniele

World of the Weren



The bloody history of the weren has been molded by the harsh conditions of Kurg, their homeworld. The unrelenting climate and the dangerous ecosystem threatened the weren for millennia, but in time they made the race both powerful and resistant to hardship. The weren had no choice but to grow strong.

Though Kurg's hostile climate still shapes weren culture today, a new force now affects the way the weren live. For the last three hundred years, they have been deeply influenced by human contact and tutelage. During these centuries, the weren have made remarkable strides in all areas of endeavor. As a result, weren society has split. Most weren live offworld, among starfaring nations such as the Orlamu Theocracy or the Orion League; but the clan elders, the ancient seats of power and status, even the root of weren identity, remain locked in the artificially maintained isolation of their frozen homeworld.

Marrizhe

STR	20 (2d4 + 15)	INT	3 (Animal 8 or d4 + 6)
DEX	4 (d6)	WIL	12 (d4+10)
CON	17 (2d4 + 10)	PER	2 (Animal 10 or d4 + 8)

Durability: 25/25/13/13 **Action Check:** 9+/8/4/2
Move: run 24, walk 6 **#Actions:** 2
Reaction Score: Marginal/1

Attacks

Horns	14/7/3	d6 + 2s/d6w/d6 + 1w	LI/O
Stampede	12/6/3	2d8s/2d6 + 2w/2d4 + 1m	LI/G

Defenses
+4 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
–2 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

Skills
Unarmed Attack [15], Movement [17]—*race* [18], Stamina [17]—*endurance* [18], Awareness [13]—*perception* [14]

PL 0: The Hunters

The earliest weren were small groups of nomadic hunters and gatherers, perpetually wandering Kurg's temperate equator. They followed migrating herds of wild animals, relying on their powerful claws and excellent camouflage to hunt both large and small game. To hunt and grow fat was the ideal weren life. Unfortunately for the weren hunters, times weren't always good. A crippling illness, a poor hunting season, or a lingering injury might keep the hunters from providing enough meat to feed the family. In lean times, the weren foraged for roots, nuts, and the fatty Kurgish vegetables called *hgoumas* and *palna*. Their claws served them well in cracking open the enormous seed pods so common among Kurgish plants. Somehow, the weren scraped by, though ancient legends tell many tales of hunger and want. Even today, success is described as *gru-vat* or "meat-bringing," and poverty is sometimes called *hgoumas mat nate* or "a diet of hgoumas."

In these times, the nomadic weren lived in tight family groups, banding together to ensure success in the hunt and to defend themselves against other weren. They fought primarily over status, mates, or access to hunting grounds. The weren were far more successful than other predatory species, and the world was their garden.

Weren historians refer to this period as the Hunter's Age. Few records remain from that time, but in general it was a time of stone tools and simple laws. Though it lies thousands of years in the past, it remains a source of nostalgia for modern weren who must deal with the frustrations and dilemmas of interstellar life, commerce, and technology. Many modern weren art forms hearken back to this simpler time, which the weren treasure as the fountainhead of all that is good and right in their culture.

PL 1: The Great Clans

After millennia of wandering, many weren settled in the rich coastal valleys of Kurg's single temperate continent, farming palna root and seedpods and herding the marrizhe, a powerful migratory herbivore that has some small resemblance to a yak—if a yak had a triple-layered pelt and enormous shovel-like horns capable of breaking up the permafrost. (See the sidebar, above.) Suddenly groups of weren no longer had to follow their food around. The simple family groups of the Hunter's Age gradually grew into more extended families and became clans. To this day, the clan remains the fundamental unit of weren society, much as the clutch is the unit of t'sa society or the nuclear family is among humans.

Each clan laid claim to a territory and settled into the task of becoming civilized. The numbers of weren pursuing agriculture grew rapidly. Contact between the clan settlements remained sporadic, though explorers often crossed the mountains and rivers separating the most fertile regions. Over time, the nomadic weren were pushed farther and farther away from the rich river lands and out onto the subarctic tundra. Food was plentiful there, and the conflict between nomadic and settled weren declined for several hundred years, until population pressures once again brought the two major branches of the weren family tree into conflict.

The renewal of major raiding was sparked by a relatively minor incident. A prized marrizhe stud from the city of Urdevec by the name of Inaillo (literally, "dusty coat") was captured by a group of rustling nomads called the Anbem. The steed's owner was Ioshaj Urdev, the captain of Urdevec's warband, and the insult was the latest in a series of setbacks for the city of Urdevec. The city weren responded by raiding the culprits, visiting the Anbem camp when the hunters were all tracking down game. Urdev's soldiers killed a number of young and elderly weren and burned the nomad's tents. The resulting spiral of violence eventually dragged in more than a dozen coastal cities and nearly a hundred nomadic bands. Though individually the nomadic weren were more than a match for the sedentary weren of the coastal cities, the settled weren could marshall much greater numbers at once, and eventually they also had better weapons and training for war. Though the settled weren always returned to their homes for planting and harvests, in between, their warbands took a toll on the nomadic raiders. The raids increased in frequency and intensity over the following generations, and the code of raiding only for food and status fell into disuse. Bloodshed became commonplace during even the simplest raids.

PL 2: Rise of the Warlords and Purifiers

The clan-based culture of the coastal settlements gave the weren more free time to pursue goals beyond the production of food and offspring. Several classes of specialists arose: warlords like Acomsi Talmi, priests like the conniving Black Prophet, and professional soldiers like the Captains of Urdev or the young exiles called the Wandering Daughters were chief among them. Although

priests and warriors had long existed in roving bands of weren, these figures now led large groups. The warlords established semi-dynastic lines, though inheritance was never easy or certain. At the same time, the traditions of the Lawreaders and the blood prices they set (See "Culture & Society," below) prevented the settled clans from tearing themselves apart from the inside as they grew into groups of hundreds of thousands.

The priests—once little more than advisors and witch doctors—found strength in numbers as well, and several weren city states of the period were functionally theocratic states. The most successful of these, the Church of the Purifier, has survived to the modern era. Religious warfare never really found a foothold on Kurg, though; the practical weren simply adopted the religion of whatever warlord ruled at any given time. The use of the trappings of several weren religions to lend authority to these warlords was common; the proof of the inherent value of any religion was its ability to attract followers and popular support, or to raise them up from within. Concepts of martyrdom are notably absent from the period; weren just didn't fight for their religious beliefs as fiercely as they did for their clan and lineage.

The greatest rival to the Purifier faith during the Age of Warlords was the movement called the Spiritual Reckoning. The Reckoning and its followers ("Reckoners," for short) leaned heavily on the importance of lineage, making one's bloodline of paramount importance and creating a priestly class with great authority over its followers' lives. The faith's central tenet is that all living weren are judged by the spirits of their forebearers at their death. Only those found worthy are allowed into the Sacred Host of weren patron ancestors, giving them the authority to judge those who die after them. Furthermore, each Reckoner bloodline is strengthened by the blood of defeated enemies; a weren who kills many foes is imparting spiritual strength to his sons and daughters. The faith blossomed for about 250 years, but after a series of setbacks during the Black Wars (see below), the numbers of the Reckoners declined, and today fewer than 3% of all weren on Kurg follow this once-mighty faith. Their reputation for pride and a well-known willingness to die give other weren pause before challenging a member of any Reckoner clan.

By this point the year-round warbands of the early settled era had become standing armies. They and the other members of the upper classes were supported by the farming and herding of the lower working class. The armies of the coastal cities turned against their neighbors; a few warlords managed to hold onto more than a single city, though the turnover in the political fortunes of the weren city-states was often quite swift. In addition, the well-trained armies allowed the clans to increase their own food supply by stealing food from their neighbors, or taking it from neighbors as tribute. By the end of the Age of Warlords, the warriors formed the core of weren society, and all else revolved around them.

PL 3: The Black Wars

Life on Kurg continued in this pattern of feuds, small raids, and short, bloody wars for millennia. In 2117, the weren of the Kell clan made a technological leap that almost destroyed the species. Krazhe the Wise—an elder, priest, and inventor among the Kell—discovered the explosive properties of sulfur, carbon, and salt-peter: gunpowder.

The Kell clan warriors quickly put this new discovery to use and created basic firearms and enormous grenades. With these new weapons, they slaughtered two neighboring clans and occupied their cities, suffering only minimal losses themselves. They then consolidated their hold on this new territory and launched attacks at their new neighbors. By that time, however, the word had spread, and enough guns had been captured in battles that these clans had copied them. Unfortunately, they just did not have time to make many of them before they, too, were conquered by the Kell clan. They were more successful at slowing the attack down, so clans farther from the center of the expansion had even more time to research these new weapons. When the Kell next attacked,

New Career: Tracker

This Free Agent career is only available to primitive weren from the hinterlands of Kurg; more sophisticated and educated weren from the Orlamu Theocracy are not raised from birth with the requisite emphasis on survival, pursuit, and hunter's lore. The tracker is the weren woodsman *par excellence.* Always born into one of Kurg's nomadic tribes rather than its settled clans, the tracker masters the arts of camouflage and stealth from an early age. Many trackers profess the Reckoner faith or follow the animist priests of the nomadic clans.

Signature Equipment: Marrizhe-hide parka, snowshoes, firestarter materials, flintlock, skinning knife

Suggested Skill Package: Unarmed Attack—*brawl,* Primitive Ranged Weapons—*flintlock,* Awareness—*intuition,* Stealth—*hide, sneak,* Investigate—*search, track.* Cost: 40 points.

they met two allied clans who were also armed with gunpowder. The battles of that summer's campaign were a fierce series of slaughters for both sides, now remembered simply as the Black (or Bloody) Summer. Despite the horrendous losses, gunpowder technology spread like wildfire over all the coasts and even into the interior—as soon as the nomads of the North and South learned the value of the new weapons, they raided, seized, or traded for them.

As gunpowder spread, weren warfare itself changed. The bloodier campaigns decimated the warrior classes. Each battle claimed more weren lives, and battles became more common. Every clan believed that gunpowder gave them an advantage over their enemies. The weren population actually declined; indeed, the weren were in danger of reducing their numbers so severely that their clan holdings would fall apart, and the town weren might have lapsed into a barbaric state. Traditionally, coastal soldiers could not enlist until they were twenty years of age. At its worst, in the Kell Campaigns of 2234 to 2236, flintlocks were pressed into the hands of tuskless "warriors" as young as twelve years old (see "Physiology" below).

As the species stood on the brink of racial suicide, however, the weren were rescued. In December 2246, the OSS *Brightfall*—an Orlamu Theocracy survey vessel—was on a routine follow-up mission when they discovered the weren civilization. The soldiers and scouts on board, all from the Orlamu Theocracy, studied the weren for several months, watching, waiting, and examining every detail of the weren culture. They did not reveal their presence, instead sending the information back to the Theocracy. The Theocracy conducted a strenuous debate at the highest levels, considering how best to approach this new species. The weren systems of religious philosophy and their often complex political structures implied that weren held great promise, but their vendettas and blood feuds were in serious danger of destroying them. At last, the Orlamu Theocracy agreed that not doing anything was surely worse than interfering in the werens' affairs, so on the 12th of May, 2247, the External Affairs Ambassador signed an internal document called the Contact Decree. Within hours, a first contact specialist named Jamal Kidwai (later called Jamal Abuweren) was dispatched to the planet's surface, and a new age of cooperation, learning, and occasionally violent misunderstanding began.

The conflict between the clans didn't exactly end with the arrival of humans, but at least it gave the clans something different to think about. Weren priests and philosophers speculated endlessly about the weren place in the universe; some of these debates turned bloody. The Orlamus kept the violence down to an occasional murderous rush, rather than the constant and total warfare they had found on their arrival. The weren entered into an age of rapid—but carefully managed—technological growth that they are still undergoing. The Induced Renaissance began, and within a decade the Orlamus were accepting petitions from worthy weren to leave Kurg and travel the stars.

PL 4–7: Post-Contact

After the arrival of the Orlamus, the divisions between the two societies on Kurg grew even deeper. The settled weren accepted the Orlamu offer of guidance, but the nomadic clans of the North and South rejected the offworlders.

The townland weren have benefited greatly from contact with the offworlders. In the last two hundred years, their Induced Renaissance has been sustained by the knowledge that the universe extends far beyond Kurg—and many of the youngest, most violent weren left to explore and settle the outside world. With just the slightest push of Orlamu guidance, the weren have made great advances in art, communications, literature, and medicine.

The Orlamus rarely interfere directly in weren affairs; at most, they advise and nudge the weren to the point where the weren make the advances themselves. Most Orlamu influence has been tangential, through the education and training of weren warriors. A small fraction of these trained, modern weren secretly return to Kurg to teach their fellows what they have learned. Though officially forbidden by the Orlamu, in practice it is difficult to prevent.

The Orlamus first attempted to put some controls on weren warfare. They forced the leaders of the townland clans to agree to stricter codes of conduct on the battlefield. For the first time, surrender and ransom became options for a commander, and no modern weren army dares to attack during a truce. But despite these limited successes, two hundred years of Orlamu effort have not really stopped or even blunted the weren taste for war. The weren spent far too many millennia doing battle, and combat is too much a part of their culture for it to be forgotten so quickly. More importantly, the Orlamu quickly recognized the value of having the galaxy's finest warriors available to them. Within a generation after contact, elite weren combat teams, with their superior camouflage and endurance, won the Theocracy more than a few battles in the Second Galactic War. The weren shock troops remain a potent resource for dealing with problems today.

The nomadic tribes of the far North and South, where life was much colder and more difficult, followed a different road after contact. Those who accepted Orlamu offers of guidance benefited in the same ways that the townland clans did, while keeping their traditional way of life mostly intact. Others, however,

refused to bargain with humans and sought lands untainted by human footsteps. The Orlamus even helped in this, setting aside certain regions as "cultural preservation districts." Humans are still forbidden to enter these districts today. Oddly, the clans that fled into these districts most often were those who were most hard-pressed by starvation and other weren. In the vast empty regions, they sought to avoid old enemies and rejected all contact with humans. They believed that the Orlamus had come to help their enemies destroy them, and they would not be convinced otherwise.

After being driven from their usual lands, these weren fundamentalists lived much the way they always had: following vast herds of marrizhe across the frozen wastes and raiding their old neighbors in the townlands for anything they could carry away. The strategy worked, and from 2200 to about 2400, the raiding cultures expanded, eventually generating much alarm among the Orlamu, who saw themselves losing the fight against barbarism. Though the raiders were surprisingly successful for several generations, recently the raiding culture has been fading away. In the long run, the raiding clans lacked the town clans' numbers and technology, and neither the preservation districts nor their hit-and-run guerrilla tactics prevented reprisals by their own kind. In the end, the impulse to adopt new ways and abandon clan warfare has won out over many old rivalries. At least, those clans who accepted human help—however minor—have won out over those clans that turned their back on the galaxy and tried to remain frozen in time.

2501: Current Prospects

Though the policy of nonintervention remains in place, in practice weren culture on Kurg has continued to react to humanity's presence. However, the reaction is not always easily understood. For instance, weren art continues to mystify Orlamu observers, as it seems to be relentlessly realistic, but the weren emphasis on indirect symbolism and allegory reveals many layers of meaning to an educated weren, even in something as relatively straightforward as a bust or a landscape painting. At the same time,

Culture & Society

Each weren's place in society is governed by many factors, but by far the most important are clan, lineage, battle prowess, and wealth. When two weren meet for the first time, the interplay of these factors determines how they react to each other.

An important omission from the equation is gender. Weren recognize few differences between the sexes, and males and females are held in equal regard. According to tradition, all titles and offices are open to all weren, though in practice a clan generally is either matriarchal or patriarchal, rarely allowing both sexes access to the clan's positions of leadership.

Clan is the single most important weren attribute. Much of each weren's sense of worth is wrapped up in the history, strength, and accomplishments of his or her clan. To some extent an individual always serves his clan first and himself second.

Clan dictates how weren feel about each other. The political alliances or enmity between two clans can dictate how two weren react when they first meet. In the most extreme cases, two weren who have never set foot on Kurg may fight to the death on sight, simply because their clans are currently at war.

The greatest punishment for a weren is the removal of the offender's claws, euphemistically called *pito ta* or "claw-washing." Because weren claws—unlike human fingernails—are extensions of their bone structure, their removal cripples the criminal's hands for up to a year, and many never heal properly. Even the most hardbitten weren veteran can be intimidated by the thought of being left helpless, unable to hunt, fight, or duel, and unable to handle most implements without clumsy prostheses. Lesser punishments include banishment, castration, enforced servitude, and—among nomad clans—ritual scarring to create patchy fur.

Family lineage is in some sense a subset of clan but is far more specific. Weren take pride in their family's deeds in service to their clan. Each line's most famous members color the way their clansmen relate to them, and the duties the family has undertaken in the past often govern what duties they are given in the present ("Since you are of the line of Haargel the Slayer, you must lead the charge").

Sometimes a family's worthy forebears were nobles, but weren nobility is not generally hereditary. Most noble positions are held for life, barring extraordinary circumstances. When a noble's position—such as clan parag, or leader—becomes available, all clan members may choose to compete to take their place. Each candidate must show the clan why he or she deserves the position, usually by declaiming both his family lineage and his personal accomplishments. In a few cases, the position falls to a noble's son or daughter, unless someone else can show a clearly superior lineage. In these cases, a noble title shifts from one family when circumstances dictate change; for instance, a warrior may step forward to take the leadership when a clan has just begun a war. If the offspring or noble somehow alienates the clan or shames his lineage, his position might evaporate entirely.

Weren respect nothing more than combat ability. The entire culture glorified warriors for centuries. They learn to fight early, in earnest struggles against their siblings for their share of food. They fight for position within their family as they mature. The best fighters are chosen early and trained to become the armies of the weren, fighting for clan honor and for their own place within the clan. Almost all noble positions go to a clan's warriors; a few fall to the clan's priests or philosophers.

Wealth is a relatively new factor in calculating status. Until about 2200 or so, the best warriors were also the wealthiest weren. As weren civilization grew and trade expanded, merchants became more important. The richest weren traders now wield enough power to dictate terms to the nobles they supposedly serve, or to ignore them entirely. As more weren leave the planet and enter cultures where wealth is the single most important social marker, more and more of them are adopting a consumer or capitalist orientation.

Weren Dueling

The weren emphasis on honorable battle has led to a large, unwritten code of behavior regarding the proper ways, times, and forms of violence. When and how a weren fights often seems complicated to outsiders, but at its heart are some very simple rules. A weren does not fight an obviously inferior opponent. Most weren consider nonweren to be inferior by definition, and unworthy of a formal challenge. Adult weren rarely start a fight without cause, though what counts as starting a fight is fairly loosely defined and often depends on the weren's mood. Honorable weren kill only opponents who clearly intend to kill them. Even then, a weren does not usually kill someone who did not have a realistic chance of killing them.

Weren often fight to determine rank, to settle an argument, or to advance in social standing. When two weren meet, they fight to decide who dominates the relationship unless one of them immediately accepts a subordinate position. When challenging a superior to take his place, the challenge must be made on the superior's home ground at a propitious hour; seconds or intermediaries such as priests are often used to choose a proper time for the challenge. In a few cases, these challenges are purely formal; no actual combat ensues, but the prearranged "loser" still must appear, face off against his opponent, and then concede. Noble titles cannot be won through a challenge, except when the position is vacant. Challenges made during times of crisis are always frowned upon.

many young weren emulate human styles; perspective painting and abstract art were both unknown to the weren at first contact but have since been adopted by some clans. Their value is still hotly debated among weren traditionalists.

At the same time, a few weren and humans have become great celebrities on Kurg, primarily philosophers grappling with meaning, cosmology, morality, and aesthetics. Many young weren read Nietschze and find his work compelling—the dead German would be amused to find that 26th-century aliens have built him a small shrine. Despite this small inroad, most weren find the arguments of their own kind more satisfying and more comfortable. Modern weren philosophers such as Unlarg Jndoor are held in high regard, and the weren see no conflict in the fact that Jndoor is at once a philosopher, a bookkeeper, and a reservist in the Undevec artillery. His volume *On Hunter's Ethics* even enjoyed a brief popularity among the Orlamus.

Life is different for weren who have left Kurg. When a weren wishes to leave Kurg, he or she must first petition the Orlamus for permission. If this is granted, and it usually is, the weren must then arrange to pay their way off the planet. This is difficult for most weren, as the cost can be rather high. Many choose at this time to have their way paid for them by the Orlamu military, or by any one of a number of mining or heavy industry companies, all of whom have recruiters stationed on Kurg for just such opportunities. In exchange for a ticket offplanet, these weren agree to work for a certain period of time to pay off their debt. All of this is carefully monitored by the Theocracy, to insure that the weren are not mistreated or taken advantage of by these corporations.

Weren who have recently emigrated offplanet often suffer serious loneliness and homesickness. Many suddenly find themselves thrust into a society where they are a very small minority, surrounded by unfamiliar technology. Some remain at the jobs they took to repay their ticket debt, even after that debt has been repaid. They prefer the security offered by guaranteed work and the respect they receive for their natural abilities, especially in the military.

The Orlamu military has benefited more than most from the discovery of the weren. Indeed, weren shock battalions are the elite ground forces of the Orlamu military. Their strength and stamina make a troop of weren much more effective than the human equivalent. How do you defeat a squad of 2.2-meter-tall, battle-frenzied killing machines who shrug off wounds that would certainly kill humans? Weren units are always led by weren officers, and their battalions are given considerably more latitude than others. Members of other species have been allowed to join weren units, but this is rare. In most cases, a week of weren training kills soldiers of other species. The ones who survive can be numbered among the best soldiers of the Stellar Ring.

Some weren have searched out their fellow off-world clan members and formed colonies, companies, or mercenary groups. They've become offworld splinters of their clan, and earn much wealth and honor, often sending money back to relatives still on Kurg. Others have banded together into a broader, pan-weren alliance and have founded communities welcoming any weren who wishes to join. Weren who put clan before species are excluded from these communities, for fear that old hatreds could tear the community apart. So far, all of these experimental communities have succeeded, and the Orlamu are justly proud of the progress their client species has made.

However, not all weren are so idealistic or so willing to give up their clan heritage. Many offworld weren simply set off on their own and adopt a variety of professions to make a name for themselves. These weren learn to live among the other species of human space and to deal with PL 6 technology. Most adapt slowly but eventually have no more problems than anyone else.

Offworld weren do have a unique problem: they are cut off from the social hierarchy. A weren's sense of self is so tied to his place, his family's place, and his clan's place in society that removal can erode a weren's identity. For this reason, weren born and raised on Kurg keep close tabs on news from home, especially news related to clan status and rivalry. This hunger for the latest developments has been exploited by the major news services, and getting updates from Kurg into the hands of recent emigrants is a small but steady industry. Every news carrier in the Orlamu Theocracy (and many others) carries current news from Kurg, and some weren buy from several different carriers just to make sure they don't miss anything.

Weren have been leaving Kurg since the Orlamus arrived, and as a result, some weren have been settled elsewhere for as long as five generations. These

expatriate weren lead a dual life, balancing their simple heritage with the high tech world around them. Weren parents make every effort to teach their children the importance of honor and clan, but these things fade over time. Those who can afford it arrange for their children to live on Kurg for a while, to better appreciate what it means to be weren, but the weren culture outside Kurg is in sharp decline. As is the fate of most discovered cultures, weren society is being replaced by the more active, discovering culture, which in this case is human.

Weren of the Orlamu Theocracy have adapted to the modern world and have internalized the values, history, and culture of Old Space. The most straightforward example of weren culture being absorbed by the more dynamic human culture is in the Lighthouse, where weren serve as bodyguards, security officers, and even priests of the Orlamist faith—but weren no longer fight each other for the honor of their clan. The weren have adopted the ways of humankind, leaving the dust and snow of Kurg far behind.

Technology

Technology on Kurg is a curious amalgam of late feudal and early industrial techniques operating side-by-side with much more advanced ideas. The impact of the Orlamus on weren technology is subtle but pervasive; they decide what does and doesn't make it to the planet surface. Indeed, the Orlamu forbid anyone from introducing any new technology onto Kurg without their approval. Their screening procedures are thorough, and their punishments very harsh. However, small shipments of various technological items are smuggled onto the planet and horded by the clan leaders, primarily for personal use or for a surprise defense during an attack.

While the Orlamus seek to guide the weren further along the path to galactic civilization, they rarely give them anything outright. All the weren's advances must be earned. At the same time, the Orlamus do push the weren into certain channels, resulting in great advances in areas that the Orlamus hold dear. For example, medical technology on the planet stands far ahead of the rest of their technology. They understand the germ theory of disease, and they know how to prevent infection.

In most other areas, however, the weren remain artificially held to a lower progress level, roughly equivalent to what was available during the 1600s in Europe. Single shot black powder pistols and rifles are the weapons of the day, though the weren versions of black powder weaponry are much more powerful than human weapons of the same era, due to the weren's ability to handle a greater recoil.

Weren transportation on Kurg is woefully inadequate. Travelling weren must walk, travel by sled, or ride marrizhe. The marrizhe serve the weren not only as food animals but also as beasts of burden. They are also the preferred mount of soldiers and raiders, as they can carry heavy loads for great distances.

Most communications rely on hand-carried letters, although the Orlamus have relaxed their ban on technology when it comes to communications gear and allow the clan leaders to communicate face-to-face over vid screens. The Orlamu feel that this helps move the weren toward civilization, as open communication defuses political tension more often than it provokes it. This policy also keeps the Orlamus much better informed, because they monitor these conversations closely.

Offworld weren use the same technology available to other species, but they suffer from some problems unique to their worldview and culture. For new immigrants, moving from a 17th-century technology into the Fusion Age is a bit of a shock, and weren don't generally adjust well. They remain suspicious of new technology and stubbornly cling to familiar ways of doing things. They lack the innate curiosity of the t'sa or the logical investigative rigor of the mechalus.

When a weren interacts with items that look familiar, they usually don't work quite as he thinks they should. For example, most werens have seen and used black powder pistols. Hand a northern clan warrior a 9mm zero-g pistol, and what is he going to do? He does not understand the basics: breech loading, releasing a safety, cocking an automatic, or unjamming the weapon, so he'll be more likely to shoot himself than an enemy. Combat specs of other species learn these things from watching holos from an early age. Not so the weren. When he fires the weapon, he often misses because he leads the target too much; the muskets he is familiar with all have a much slower muzzle velocity. And this example just covers firearms, a technology with which the weren are familiar. Imagine how they might react to a computer terminal.

Some weren never overcome their resistance to new tools and ways of getting things done. These poor, stubborn souls stick with what they know for their whole life, unable to adjust fully to the modern technology; if they are lucky, their offspring fare better. However, most weren overcome their reluctance

Weren Weapons

Skill	Acc	Md	Range	Type	Damage (O/G/A)	Actions	Clip Size	Clip Cost	Hide	Cost
15.2 mm SMG	+1	B/A	15/30/80	HI/G	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m	4	—/10	50	+2	4500
25 mm Shotgun	0	F	9/15/40	HI/O	d6w/d8w/d4+1m	2	10	25	+3	800
Dueling Claw	0	Personal	—	LI/O	d4w/d4 + 2w/d4+3w	4	—	—	–1	300
Great Sword	0	Personal	—	LI/G	d4+3w/d6+2w/d4+1m	2	—	—	+4	2500
Herder's Club	0	Personal	—	LI/O	d4+3w/d6+2w/d4+1m	2	—	—	+1	5
Klickstopper Pistol	0	F	5/10/40	HI/O	d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+3m	2	5	25	+4	900
Sword Claw	0	Personal	—	LI/O	d4+3w/d6+3w/d4+2m	2	—	—	+1	400

and fear of change. In a few months or a year, they are fully integrated in interstellar society. In fact, despite their bad reputation, most offworld weren have no problem with technology, since they grew up with fewer misconceptions. In many ways, the technophobic weren is just a stereotype.

Other problems are harder to overcome. For instance, weren don't exactly match the standard human body size. Anything they wear or use must be specially made to fit, and they pay twice as much for clothing, armor, and even vehicles and housing. Weren size does have certain inborn advantages, however, such as allowing them to use larger and heavier devices easily. For instance, weren construction workers can lift massive riveters that would require expensive robots in a human-only shipyard, and weren miners use more powerful plasma torches to move ore faster. Most important to action-oriented heroes, weren can handle heavier weapons.

Several weapon manufacturers have created large-caliber, special-purpose weren guns with greater masses and heavier recoils. More powerful than any human equivalent, the recoil of a weren gun can shatter a human arm. To a weren, though, they are more comfortable to use than normal guns, sized to fit weren proportions and accommodate their claws. The only drawback of these weapons is that they rely on the simplest mechanical principles, to more easily accommodate weren technophobia. A typical example of these weapons is the 25 mm weren shotgun, a double-barrel breech-loading weapon about 1.4 meters long and weighing about 16 kg. The weapon is easy to use, easy to maintain, and absolutely devastating in combat.

In addition, weren are extremely skilled at infighting, using weapons based on clawlike attacks. The most famous example is the sword claw, a long and heavy blade strapped to the weren's forearm. While it is too large and heavy to be effectively used by a human, when combined with the tremendously long reach of weren, the sword claw can be quite deadly.

Weren Unarmed Combat

The weren excel at Unarmed Combat. However, as written in the *Player's Handbook*, the Unarmed Combat skill rank benefit specifies increased damage ranges based on a human. Weren heroes who reach rank 8 in *brawl* inflict d6w/d6+2w/d6m, plus any Strength bonuses, instead of the damage inflicted by all other species. A weren who reaches rank 7 in *power martial arts* inflicts d6+2w/d6+4w/ d4+2m, plus any Strength bonuses.

Weren Weapons

15.2 mm SMG: With a 10-round clip, this weapon doesn't fire long, but it doesn't need to: reports from the field indicate the 15.2 can take down a klick or even two with a single burst, much less when on autofire. Given its remarkable recoil, however, even weren sometimes have trouble tracking a target.

25 mm Shotgun: With a roar that makes a weren seem quiet, the 25 mm shotgun packs a lot of ammo and is deadly at close range. Like all shotguns, it is drastically less effective at anything beyond short range. Weren enjoy firing it once before closing into hand-to-hand combat, and many Orlamu marines carry them for boarding actions.

Dueling Claw: Smaller than a sword claw and meant for use in formal duels aboard a spaceship (where sword claws are simply too unwieldy), the 10-cm-long dueling claw has become a favorite concealed weapon for many weren, both on Kurg and offworld. On Kurg they are usually simple steel blades fitted to an individual weren. Offworld, they are usually made of much sharper and harder ceramics, undetectable by metal detectors.

Greatsword: Made of high-grade alloy steel and honed to a fine edge offworld, the greatsword is fully 2 meters long and weighs more than 10 kilos—it is unusable by anyone of less than 14 Strength. Due to its remarkable construction, the greatsword is said to be able to carve through body tanks and small vehicles.

Herder's Club: Used primarily to keep truculent marrizhe moving, this spiked club—often called a *vennet*—is sometimes used as a dueling weapon among Kurg's nomadic tribes. On Kurg, it is also sometimes a symbol of authority, and many are beautifully carved, inlaid, and gilded. These ceremonial vennets are carried by local princes or the leaders of nomadic tribes. Among off-world weren, they are considered curios or conversation pieces.

Klickstopper 13 mm Pistol: Firing what are essentially .50 caliber bullets, this five-shot revolver is durable and powerful, capable of penetrating light vehicle armor.

Sword Claw: Resembling a fistful of short swords, the sword claw is a metal gauntlet made to conform exactly to a particular weren's fist and fit snugly over his or her natural claws. The blades are as much as 25 to 35 cm long, and some offworld varieties are made of tungsten carbide steel.

Government & Politics

Kurg's government is divided along the ancient clan lines, with states representing the twenty major clans. Of these, twelve are townland clans of the equator, and eight are nomad clans of the North and South. The number of clans changes frequently, as weaker clans are

decimated or destroyed in war and minor clans gain enough strength to take their place. Each clan is a large, extended group of families with common ancestors who are sometimes mythic figures. Each town clan governs a fertile stretch of the main continent. In the nomad lands, each clan follows a particular herd of marrizhe, living almost entirely from the hunt.

Each clan is led by a single individual. Though their titles vary, these leaders are always the rulers, military leaders, and source of authority for the clan. Their word is law, but their power is balanced by the will of the clan. The clan nobles forcibly remove a townland leader who makes too many bad decisions, replacing him with one of their own. In the nomad clans, a bad leader is usually overthrown by his strongest general.

A layer of noble families supports the clan leaders. In the townlands, each family head governs some portion of the clan's lands. The family must provide wealth and warriors for the clan in exchange for this privilege, and the exact details of each clan's contribution are often the subject of lengthy negotiations when a new clan leader is appointed. However, once settled, the terms never change until the death of one party or the other.

In times of war, many weren, even those who are spacefaring citizens of the Orlamu Theocracy—use a system of weregeld among themselves to quickly settle disputes. In this system, every crime has a price that must be paid in coin. If a criminal cannot pay the price for a crime, he becomes an *ielmar* and must redeem himself in combat by a heroic deed. Indeed, under the tradition of the ielmarg, the perpetrator must serve and defend the injured party, and only that party can release the criminal from his or her obligation. In a way, the ielmar offers a form of institutionalized forgiveness, though the most reprehensible ielmar are never forgiven for their crimes.

On Kurg proper, the ielmarg tradition is supplemented by a system of harsh physical punishments. Law enforcement is the obligation of the local lord. A lord's personal guard might serve as a town watch, or a hired set of warriors might do the job. In either case, they are aided by a caste of wandering warriors pledged to justice. These are the *mannevar*, vigilantes who enforce the laws as best they can. Though most Orlamu understand the tradition of the mannevar, such vigilante action is not allowed in the Theocracy. In theory, this restricts the mannevar to Kurg, though in practice many weren still feel the need to mete out punishment when one of their own goes bad.

Weren laws are fluid things, since the law at any given time is whatever is agreed upon by the entire clan. The clan leader may declare a law at any time, as may the barons under him to an extent; but if the law is unjust or flies in the face of tradition, the clan ignores it. Likewise, if the majority of the clan feels that a law is necessary, it is quickly passed. This can result in some interesting rules and regulations. For example, the Ketern clan still has laws regarding the proper means of splitting a catch of fish, and anti-pirating laws, even though they are entirely landlocked. The laws remain from a time when they held territory on the eastern coast.

The secret of weren jurisprudence lies in knowing what the clan wants. This can be so difficult that even the weren have trouble figuring it out, which is why most clans appoint Lawreaders, special servants of the clan leaders whose job it is to publicly recite the relevant laws of the clan on formal occasions (such as at a trial, coronation, or marriage), and to represent defendants against their accusers. Very few clans have an established way to poll their members for their opinions. Clan leaders and nobles must develop an intuitive feel for what the clan might approve; judging the shifts in weren law is essential to the political career of any noble. Many weren diplomats in the service of the Orlamu are nothing less than failed aspirants to the clan leadership.

Weren Orthodoxies

The Kurgish weren are great believers in two faiths, one held by the townland weren, the other maintained by the nomads of North and South. The townland weren follow the Purifier faith, whose central tenet declares that the soul grows more and more adept at the many tasks put before it, until finally, in its last incarnation, it surpasses physical boundaries and becomes a *gontal*, an avatar of sorts. These avatars are often worshipped by the still-living followers of the faith.

A small but growing number of weren have adopted a belief system based on a misinterpretation of Orlamu doctrine. These "heretics" believe that drivespace is a form of paradise, a place that carries the soul to a better world. When a weren is done with earthly life, it is time to accept the Orlamu offer of emigration. Those who make their "Last Pilgrimage" are often violently disappointed when they discover that not all worlds of the Orlamu Theocracy are paradises.

Offworld weren often retain their native faith, but many also adopt the Orlamist worship of drivespace. Given the incredible technological leap from

Pidgin Weren

Ambush	Nahet
Ammunition	Narda
Argument	Taten
Attack!	Gru!
Avatar	Gontal
Bravery, Brave	Gruun
Chief, lord	Parag
Claw	Ta
Conclusion	Ot
Cowardice	Ierto
Criminal	Ielmar (literally, "blood-slave")
Drivespace	Drashee-ot
Duel	Tateg
Flintlock	Lesstor
Honor	Darut
Human	Neetal
I Surrender!	Lu narad ohutoc
Offworld	Kurg-ot
Orlamu	Olam
Pacifism	Ierto-uvar
Premise	Ingve
Priest	Tendelar
Purifier	Togruelar
Rifle (modern)	Lessmat
Ship	Drashee
Soul	Uumesteg
Stop!	Tegget!
Strength	Guu'el
Sword	Tadec
Victory	Unk-taren
Vigilante	Mannevar
Where is the ....?	. . . -eg ?

Kurg	
Primary	Tinnale
Planetary Class	Class 1
Gravity	G2 (1.04g)
Radiation	R1 (13 rem/yr)
Atmosphere	A2 (N, O, CO_2, Ar)
Pressure	P3 (0.91)
Heat	H2 (1.7° C)
Orbital Distance	1.48 AU
Radius	7,910 km
Year (Earth days)	627.0 days
Day (standard)	22.9 hours
Axial Tilt	2.9°
Density	1.05
# Satellites	None

riding marrizhe-back to making starfall between star systems, perhaps this shouldn't be too surprising. Most weren reject Humanity Reformation, Christianity, Buddhism, the Church of the Oracle, and Judaism, but a small number of converts to Islam have been recorded.

Physiology

Kurg's low temperatures favor large, stocky body types. Weren, with their large mass-to-surface-area ratio, fit the type perfectly and retain heat well. They suffer much more from hot temperatures than from cold ones, though the smell of an overheated weren means that most of their companions suffer along with him.

Male and female weren show relatively few external physical differences. Their size and strength are roughly comparable. The easiest way to tell the difference on sight is that males have much larger tusks and manes.

A typical weren stands 2.2 meters tall and is almost as wide across the shoulders. Weren weigh about 150 kilograms, though many settled weren are even heavier, since sedentary weren quickly accumulate an insulating layer of body fat. Weren muscle tissue is very dense, providing resistance to injury and fatigue.

Weren fingers end in long, tough, partially retractable claws. Weren take great pride in keeping these razor sharp.

A weren's body is covered with thick fur, starting in a mane. This is not ordinary hair, however. Most furry species generate each hair from long chains of dead cells. The thicker, heavier weren hair is multi-layered and able to change color like a chameleon's skin. Pigment cells of various colors—primarily white, gray, green, and brown—line its length. When these cells either expose or hide their color, the entire strand of hair changes color.

Weren have limited control over this natural camouflage; they can adopt the hue of a nearby color, blending into the background, but they cannot change individual hairs or even small groups of hairs. The camouflaging action is almost entirely involuntary, but it is an important part of weren heritage. Ambushes are considered honorable tactics among weren, and the use of deception to gain a tactical advantage has a proud history on Kurg. Even now, a warrior who approaches a foe for close combat through the use of stealth is held to be more honorable than one who betrays the presence of his comrades through a rash charge.

Only the most desperate weren employ their tusks in combat, since they don't cause appreciably more damage than human teeth. The tusks are certainly bigger than human teeth, but they are poorly positioned for attacks.

The tusks of male weren continue to grow throughout their lifetime; the tusks of female weren reach a certain length (about 4 cm) and stop. Male weren usually file their tusks down to a reasonable length, much as humans trim their beards or t'sa maintain their crests. Among some weren warriors, exceedingly long tusks are a sign of status. Other than the difference in tusks, the degree of weren sexual dimorphism is fairly low, but weren themselves can always tell a male from a female.

Kurg

The weren homeworld is about the size of Earth, with a similar atmosphere and an orbit about as far from the sun as Mars is from Sol. The climate at the equator is temperate, though this quickly gives way to subarctic steppes and taigas toward the poles. The planet's ice caps are enormous and consist primarily of water, but they include dry ice (frozen carbon dioxide) at the poles.

Its distance from the sun and the low eccentricity of its orbit give Kurg little variation in seasons. It is a bit colder in winter, and the snow belt stretches very close to the equator, but the best approximation of Kurgish weather at any given time is simply "damn cold."

Kurg's star, Tinnale, is a Class G star that shines about two and a half times as brightly as Sol. It is slightly larger than Sol and burns a thousand degrees hotter. If Kurg were as close to Tinnale as Earth is to Sol, it would be a charred rock.

Kurg's land mass is unevenly distributed in its shallow seas. Weren culture evolved and still remains centered in one large continent about the size of Europe, Africa, and Asia combined. Many much smaller landmasses are scattered around the globe, and small weren tribes have settled a couple of these, but they are much less advanced than their cousins. Contact with these lost cousins is extremely difficult; Kurg's seas are treacherous and filled with icebergs even in the summer months.

Kurg's ecosystem, like those of many primarily arctic worlds, shows little variation; a small number of species completely dominate the environment. Few species evolve on a planet with few differentiations in global climate. Also, the low carrying capacity of the arctic ecosystem requires Kurg's animals to forage a wider area to survive. At the same time, the low temperatures favor creatures with low surface-area-to-mass ratios; big creatures retain heat better than smaller ones. As a result, Kurg is dominated by a smaller variety of large herbivores and predators rather than a plethora of smaller but more diverse species. The most famous of these species is the marrizhe.

Whether encountered on their homeworld or in the most distant reaches of the Verge, the weren—despite the influence of offworlders—remain as primal and rugged as the cold world that spawned them.

Wolfgang Baur is not quite furry enough to be mistaken for a weren. Paul was twice that hairy and had almost achieved total control over his hair's color-changing properties, until he had a tragic accident involving a large rock, paper, and scissors.

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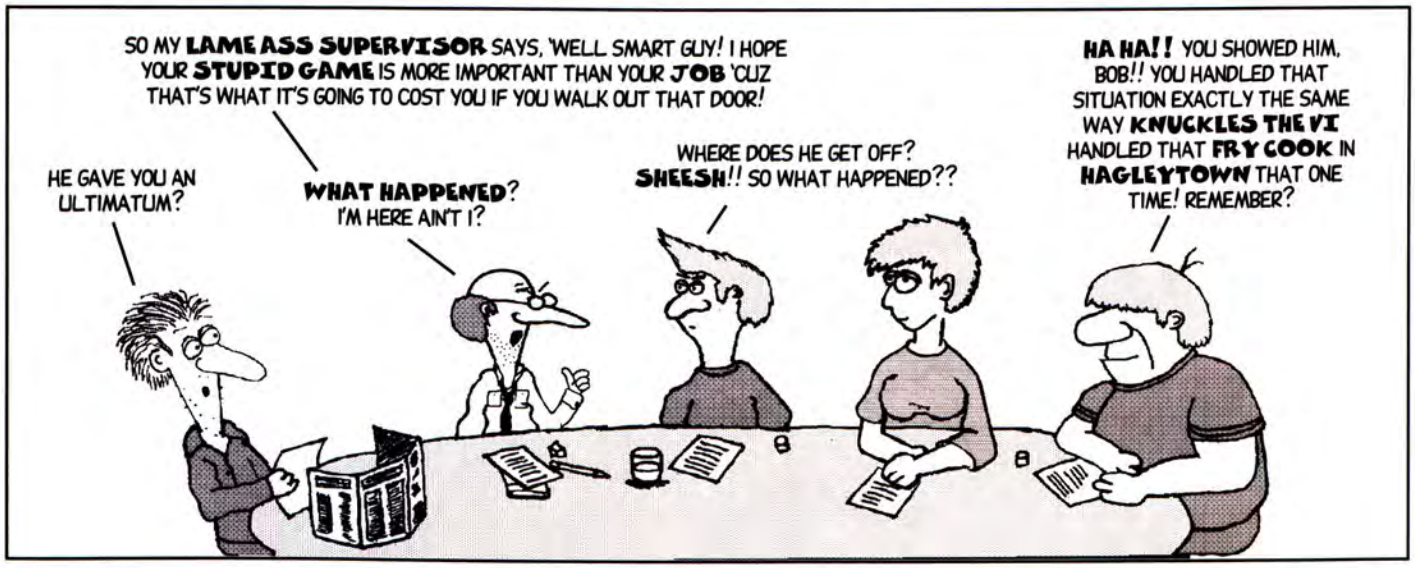
SO MY LAME ASS SUPERVISOR SAYS, 'WELL SMART GUY! I HOPE YOUR STUPID GAME IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR JOB 'CUZ THAT'S WHAT IT'S GOING TO COST YOU IF YOU WALK OUT THAT DOOR!
HE GAVE YOU AN ULTIMATUM?
WHAT HAPPENED? I'M HERE AIN'T I?
WHERE DOES HE GET OFF? SHEESH!! SO WHAT HAPPENED??
HA HA!! YOU SHOWED HIM, BOB!! YOU HANDLED THAT SITUATION EXACTLY THE SAME WAY KNUCKLES THE VI HANDLED THAT FRY COOK IN HAGLEYTOWN THAT ONE TIME! REMEMBER?

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I **PITY DA FOOL** THAT MISSES OUT ON THE **KNIGHTS**!!

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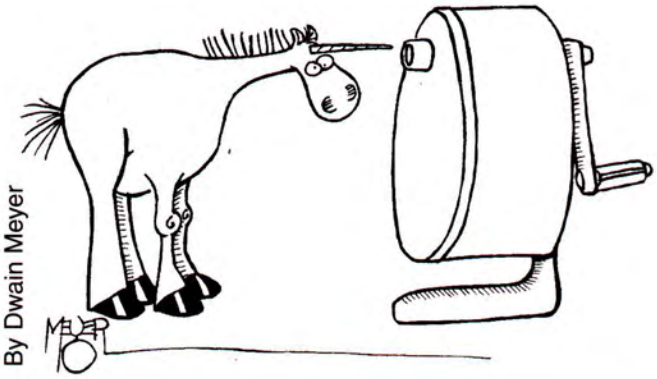
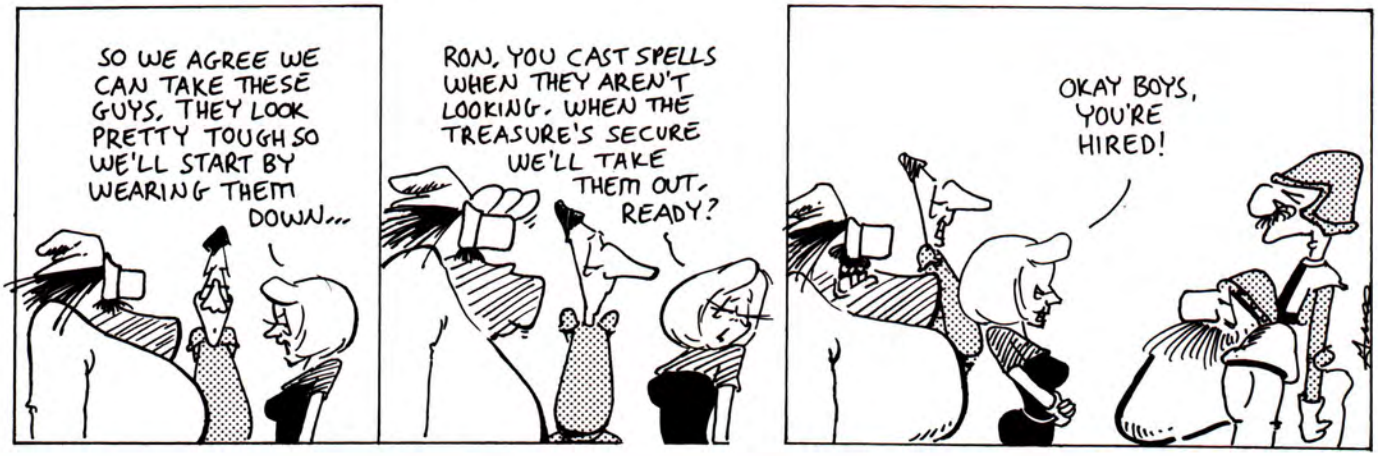
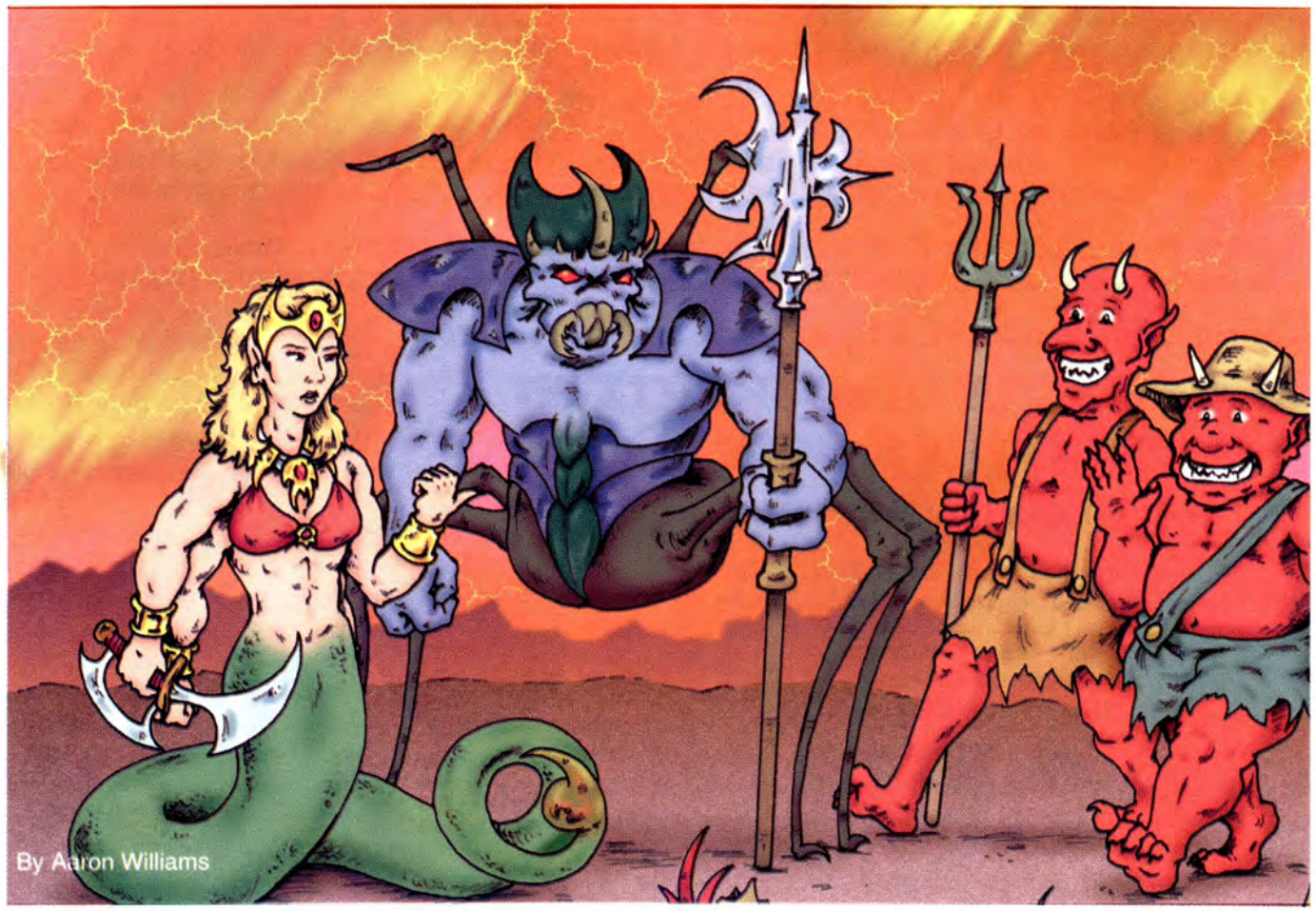
Dragon Mirth™

By Mathew Guss



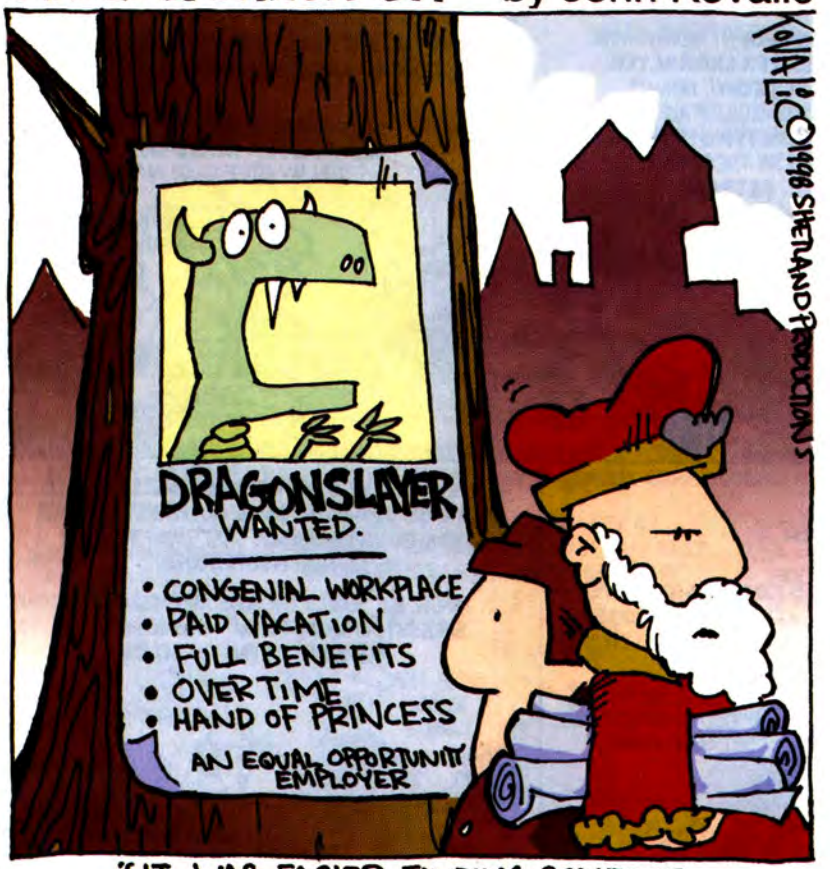
By Dwain Meyer


SO WE AGREE WE CAN TAKE THESE GUYS. THEY LOOK PRETTY TOUGH SO WE'LL START BY WEARING THEM DOWN...
RON, YOU CAST SPELLS WHEN THEY AREN'T LOOKING. WHEN THE TREASURE'S SECURE WE'LL TAKE THEM OUT. READY?
OKAY BOYS, YOU'RE HIRED!



"Oh great, hicks from the Styx"

The Unspeakable Oaf by John Kovalic



"IT WAS EASIER FINDING SOMEONE BEFORE O.S.H.A. GOT INVOLVED..."

By Dwain Meyer

"MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T LET YOUR WIFE PUT ON YOUR WAR PAINT FOR YOU... ESPECIALLY IF SHE'S MAD AT YOU..."

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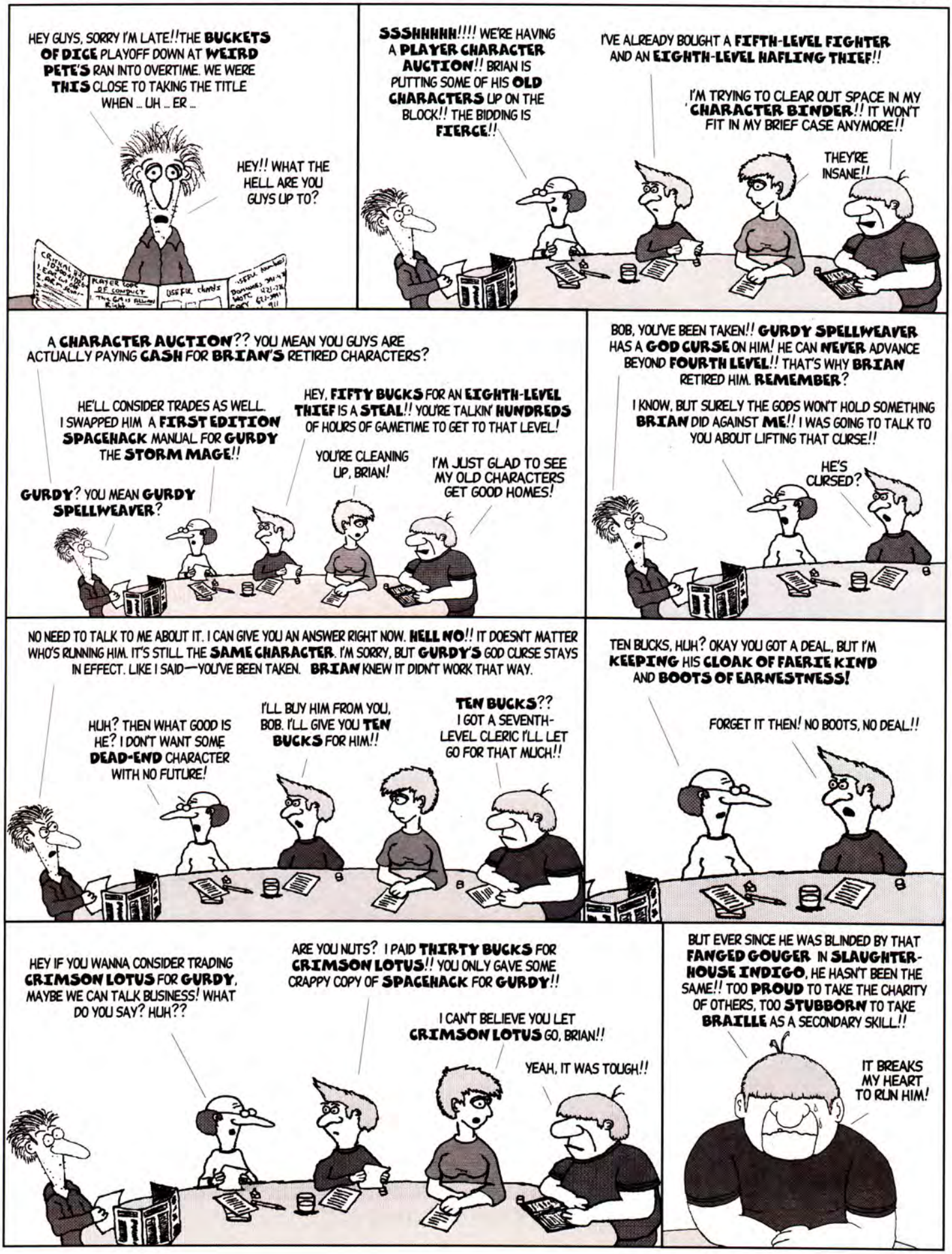
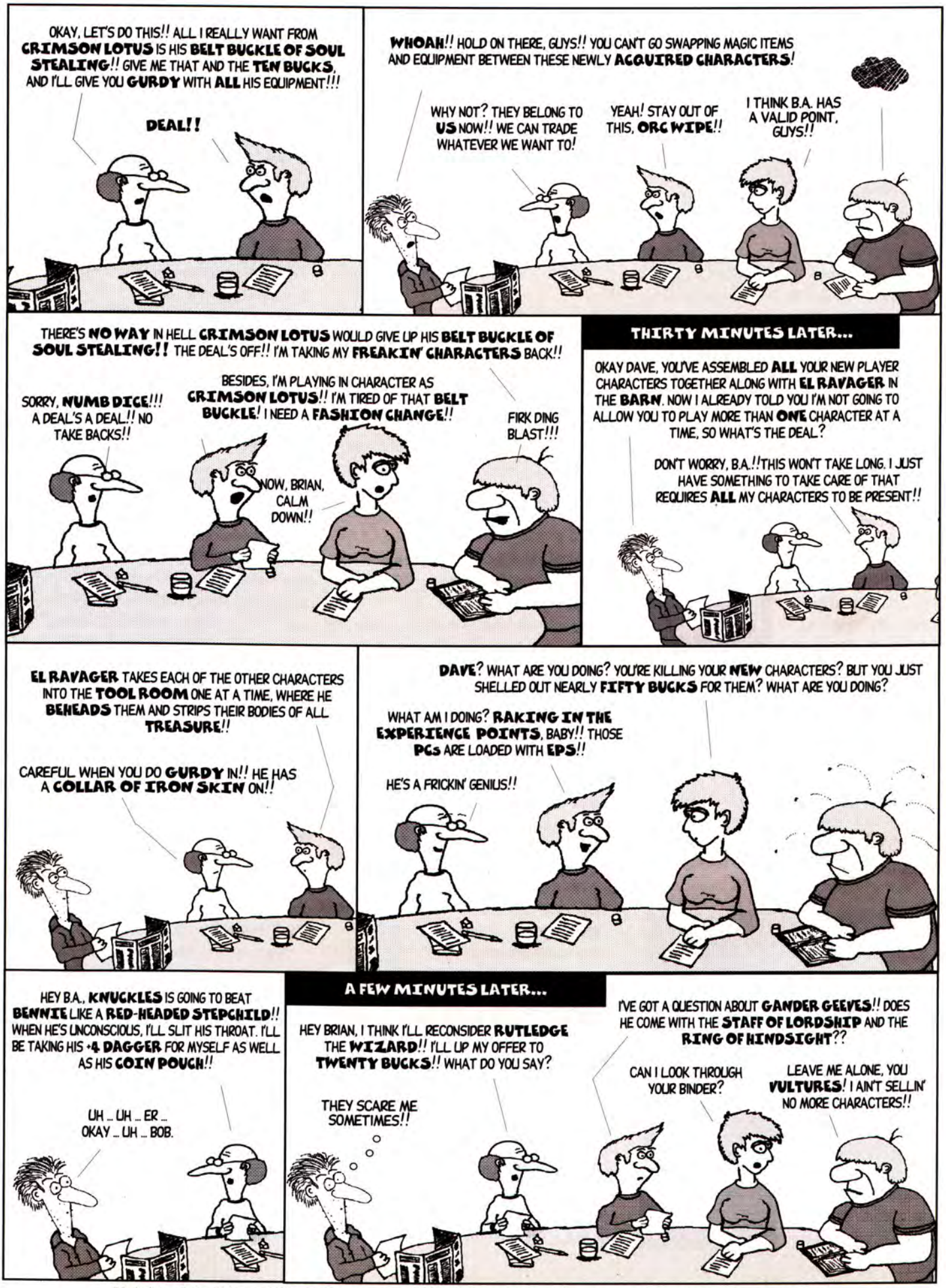
By Joe Pillsbury

Knights of the Dinner Table

BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN


HEY GUYS, SORRY I'M LATE!! THE BUCKETS OF DICE PLAYOFF DOWN AT WEIRD PETE'S RAN INTO OVERTIME. WE WERE THIS CLOSE TO TAKING THE TITLE WHEN ... UH ... ER ...
HEY!! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU GUYS UP TO?
SSSHHHHH!!!! WE'RE HAVING A PLAYER CHARACTER AUCTION!! BRIAN IS PUTTING SOME OF HIS OLD CHARACTERS UP ON THE BLOCK!! THE BIDDING IS FIERCE!!
I'VE ALREADY BOUGHT A FIFTH-LEVEL FIGHTER AND AN EIGHTH-LEVEL HAFLING THIEF!!
I'M TRYING TO CLEAR OUT SPACE IN MY CHARACTER BINDER!! IT WON'T FIT IN MY BRIEF CASE ANYMORE!!
THEY'RE INSANE!!
A CHARACTER AUCTION?? YOU MEAN YOU GUYS ARE ACTUALLY PAYING CASH FOR BRIAN'S RETIRED CHARACTERS?
HE'LL CONSIDER TRADES AS WELL. I SWAPPED HIM A FIRST EDITION SPACEHACK MANUAL FOR GURDY THE STORM MAGE!!
HEY, FIFTY BUCKS FOR AN EIGHTH-LEVEL THIEF IS A STEAL!! YOU'RE TALKIN' HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF GAMETIME TO GET TO THAT LEVEL!
YOU'RE CLEANING UP, BRIAN!
I'M JUST GLAD TO SEE MY OLD CHARACTERS GET GOOD HOMES!
GURDY? YOU MEAN GURDY SPELLWEAVER?
BOB, YOU'VE BEEN TAKEN!! GURDY SPELLWEAVER HAS A GOD CURSE ON HIM! HE CAN NEVER ADVANCE BEYOND FOURTH LEVEL!! THAT'S WHY BRIAN RETIRED HIM. REMEMBER?
I KNOW, BUT SURELY THE GODS WON'T HOLD SOMETHING BRIAN DID AGAINST ME!! I WAS GOING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT LIFTING THAT CURSE!!
HE'S CURSED?
NO NEED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT IT. I CAN GIVE YOU AN ANSWER RIGHT NOW. HELL NO!! IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO'S RUNNING HIM. IT'S STILL THE SAME CHARACTER. I'M SORRY, BUT GURDY'S GOD CURSE STAYS IN EFFECT. LIKE I SAID—YOU'VE BEEN TAKEN. BRIAN KNEW IT DIDN'T WORK THAT WAY.
HUH? THEN WHAT GOOD IS HE? I DON'T WANT SOME DEAD-END CHARACTER WITH NO FUTURE!
I'LL BUY HIM FROM YOU, BOB. I'LL GIVE YOU TEN BUCKS FOR HIM!!
TEN BUCKS?? I GOT A SEVENTH-LEVEL CLERIC I'LL LET GO FOR THAT MUCH!!
TEN BUCKS, HUH? OKAY YOU GOT A DEAL, BUT I'M KEEPING HIS CLOAK OF FAERIE KIND AND BOOTS OF EARNESTNESS!
FORGET IT THEN! NO BOOTS, NO DEAL!!
HEY IF YOU WANNA CONSIDER TRADING CRIMSON LOTUS FOR GURDY, MAYBE WE CAN TALK BUSINESS! WHAT DO YOU SAY? HUH??
ARE YOU NUTS? I PAID THIRTY BUCKS FOR CRIMSON LOTUS!! YOU ONLY GAVE SOME CRAPPY COPY OF SPACEHACK FOR GURDY!!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU LET CRIMSON LOTUS GO, BRIAN!!
YEAH, IT WAS TOUGH!!
BUT EVER SINCE HE WAS BLINDED BY THAT FANGED GOUGER IN SLAUGHTER-HOUSE INDIGO, HE HASN'T BEEN THE SAME!! TOO PROUD TO TAKE THE CHARITY OF OTHERS, TOO STUBBORN TO TAKE BRAILLE AS A SECONDARY SKILL!!
IT BREAKS MY HEART TO RUN HIM!


OKAY, LET'S DO THIS!! ALL I REALLY WANT FROM CRIMSON LOTUS IS HIS BELT BUCKLE OF SOUL STEALING!! GIVE ME THAT AND THE TEN BUCKS, AND I'LL GIVE YOU GURDY WITH ALL HIS EQUIPMENT!!!
DEAL!!
WHOAH!! HOLD ON THERE, GUYS!! YOU CAN'T GO SWAPPING MAGIC ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT BETWEEN THESE NEWLY ACQUIRED CHARACTERS!
WHY NOT? THEY BELONG TO US NOW!! WE CAN TRADE WHATEVER WE WANT TO!
YEAH! STAY OUT OF THIS, ORC WIPE!!
I THINK B.A. HAS A VALID POINT, GUYS!!
THERE'S NO WAY IN HELL CRIMSON LOTUS WOULD GIVE UP HIS BELT BUCKLE OF SOUL STEALING!! THE DEAL'S OFF!! I'M TAKING MY FREAKIN' CHARACTERS BACK!!
SORRY, NUMB DICE!!! A DEAL'S A DEAL!! NO TAKE BACKS!!
BESIDES, I'M PLAYING IN CHARACTER AS CRIMSON LOTUS!! I'M TIRED OF THAT BELT BUCKLE! I NEED A FASHION CHANGE!!
NOW, BRIAN, CALM DOWN!!
FIRK DING BLAST!!!
THIRTY MINUTES LATER...
OKAY DAVE, YOU'VE ASSEMBLED ALL YOUR NEW PLAYER CHARACTERS TOGETHER ALONG WITH EL RAVAGER IN THE BARN. NOW I ALREADY TOLD YOU I'M NOT GOING TO ALLOW YOU TO PLAY MORE THAN ONE CHARACTER AT A TIME, SO WHAT'S THE DEAL?
DON'T WORRY, B.A.!! THIS WON'T TAKE LONG. I JUST HAVE SOMETHING TO TAKE CARE OF THAT REQUIRES ALL MY CHARACTERS TO BE PRESENT!!
EL RAVAGER TAKES EACH OF THE OTHER CHARACTERS INTO THE TOOL ROOM ONE AT A TIME, WHERE HE BEHEADS THEM AND STRIPS THEIR BODIES OF ALL TREASURE!!
CAREFUL WHEN YOU DO GURDY IN!! HE HAS A COLLAR OF IRON SKIN ON!!
DAVE? WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU'RE KILLING YOUR NEW CHARACTERS? BUT YOU JUST SHELLED OUT NEARLY FIFTY BUCKS FOR THEM? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHAT AM I DOING? RAKING IN THE EXPERIENCE POINTS, BABY!! THOSE PCs ARE LOADED WITH EPS!!
HE'S A FRICKIN' GENIUS!!
HEY B.A., KNUCKLES IS GOING TO BEAT BENNIE LIKE A RED-HEADED STEPCHILD!! WHEN HE'S UNCONSCIOUS, I'LL SLIT HIS THROAT. I'LL BE TAKING HIS +4 DAGGER FOR MYSELF AS WELL AS HIS COIN POUCH!!
UH ... UH ... ER ... OKAY ... UH ... BOB.
A FEW MINUTES LATER...
HEY BRIAN, I THINK I'LL RECONSIDER RUTLEDGE THE WIZARD!! I'LL UP MY OFFER TO TWENTY BUCKS!! WHAT DO YOU SAY?
THEY SCARE ME SOMETIMES!!
I'VE GOT A QUESTION ABOUT GANDER GEEVES!! DOES HE COME WITH THE STAFF OF LORDSHIP AND THE RING OF HINDSIGHT??
CAN I LOOK THROUGH YOUR BINDER?
LEAVE ME ALONE, YOU VULTURES! I AIN'T SELLIN' NO MORE CHARACTERS!!

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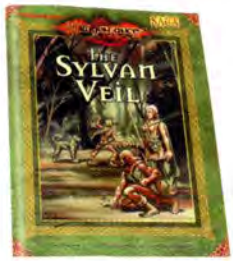

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An ALTERNITY® STAR*DRIVE™ Adventure
By Christopher Perkins

Under a veil of darkness lies half of the planet Lison, cloaked in its own shadow. Below the surface of the planet, inhabitants continue to mine the precious metals that guarantee their livelihood. Heroes negotiating for supplies soon find themselves embroiled in the machinations of competing stellar nations, facing off against treacherous black marketeers, and dodging the threat of pirates and cykoteks. The adventure culminates with a discovery that could change the balance of power in the Oberon system forever.

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Star of Cursrah

Lost Empires Series
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Paperback Novel
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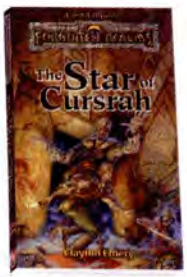

A group of adventurers stumbles across a buried city guarded by a powerful undead force. Secrets, thrills, and daring heroics punctuate this action-packed story that shares the setting of the game product *Empires of the Shining Sea*.

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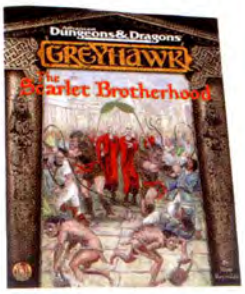
MARCH

The Scarlet Brotherhood

An AD&D GREYHAWK® Accessory
By Sean Reynolds



The shadowy villains of the World of Greyhawk take center stage in this must-have sourcebook. Once they worked in hiding, manipulating the fate of the land from the shadows through assassination and espionage. Now the Scarlet Brotherhood emerges to spread fear and terror. This product also features the return of the Monk and Assassin character classes.

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An AD&D Adventure Anthology
Edited by John Rateliff

This product compiles the best of the Adventurer's Guild retail demo adventures from 1998 into an anthology that everyone can use. Each adventure provides a taste of

TSR NEWS

New Chat Room

The TSR website has opened a new chat room for discussing tradable card games. The Taproom is a place to talk strategy and deckbuilding, or even make trades. You can find The Taproom by pointing your browser to **http://tsronline.wizards.com/chat**.

Sleeping Dragon Inn

We received over seventy entries for the Sleeping Dragon Inn contest, some from as far away as the Netherlands and Hungary. It was a tough process of elimination, but four entries stood out. Our winner was Dan Bartman of Pittsburgh, PA; and our runners-up were Chris Doyle of Bridgewater, NJ; Wayne Felske of Arlington Heights, IL; and Rick Maffei of Ridgewood, NJ. Watch these pages and those of *DUNGEON® Adventures* for more on the winning entry. Thanks to everyone who entered for making our decision so tough.

FIFTH AGE™ Narrator Stan Brown evokes a scream from Kerby Genasci, to the delight of Julie Campbell. Guess which one plays an elf.

TSR Game Day

On the afternoon of October 30, hundreds of Wizards of the Coast employees escaped their cubes to enjoy a few hours of roleplaying games in the company's second Game Day. After the traditional Halloween costume contest and a charity cook-off, meeting rooms became game rooms, and miniatures and character sheets took the place of pagers and day planners.

Mild-mannered salesman Brian Mitchell learns that he didn't get into the ALTERNITY® game he wanted.

We don't like him when he's angry.

Emily Arons checks for traps as Jan-Maree Bourgeois searches her character sheet for a torch in their first AD&D® game session.

While roleplaying was nothing new to many of the players and GMs, others had their first taste of the AD&D®, ALTERNITY®, or MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ games on Game Day. By the end of the festivities, the old hands had assimilated dozens of new gamers—or at least had shown those guys in Accounting what all the fuss is about.

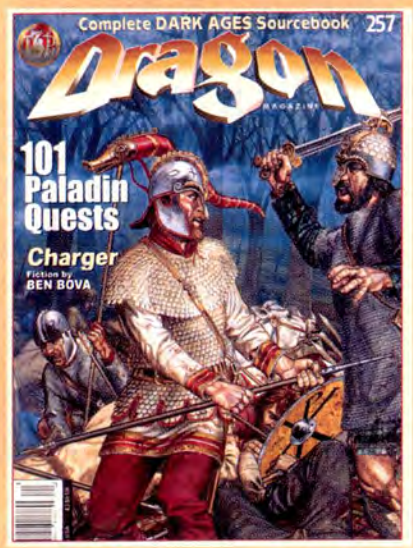
Montecon 2

Game day wasn't the only recent occasion for the TSR staff to goof off in the name of "work." In mid-November, game designer Monte Cook and *Amazing® Stories* managing editor Sue Cook hosted Montecon 2, a little game convention in which most if not all of the participants are game designers and editors.

Over 40 people attended on Saturday alone, playing board games, card games, roleplaying games … you name it. The weekend-long event even included badges and programs (illustrated by Steven "Stan!" Brown), not to mention a nonstop video room and more snacks than a full staff of game designers and editors could devour. Montecon 3 is tentatively planned for the spring of 1999.

Thomas Reid brings his own new gamer (son Aidan) to Montecon 2.

Coming Attractions



Cover by Roger Raupp

Dark Ages

By Ian Malcomson

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Explore the world of the Anglo-Saxon Dark Ages, complete with new races, kits, legendary heroes, a timeline, and other campaign information.

Charger

Fiction by Ben Bova

The immortal Orion once again aids young Arthur in his struggle to unite all of Britain.

Fighting With Flair

By Lance Hawvermale

Add some flash and daring to your Warriors with these special attacks and maneuvers.

Battlezone

By Stephen Kenson

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a different game system and setting, from the popular AD&D game to the new ALTERNITY science fiction game. It features action in a variety of settings, including the FORGOTTEN REALMS, DRAGONLANCE, GREYHAWK, PLANESCAPE®, and RAVENLOFT campaign worlds. Give the worlds of TSR a try in this exciting compilation!

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A STAR*DRIVE Novel,
By Diane Duane

The New York Times best-selling author Diane Duane continues the story begun in *Starrise at Corrivale*. As Gabriel Connor and his companion Enda scratch out a living among the dangerous stars of The Verge, they stumble upon an astonishing revelation from the depths of time.

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Outbound: An Explorer's Guide

A STAR*DRIVE Accessory
By Ed Stark

Outbound contains full descriptions of new systems and planets that can be dropped into any STAR*DRIVE campaign. Each system description includes adventure material that should draw curious heroes to the new, alien worlds, and the Explorer's Guide section expands on the existing rules for cataloging and exploring new territory.

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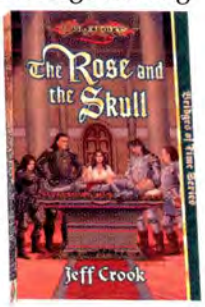

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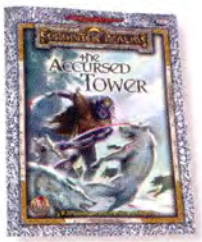

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APRIL

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By Bill Slavicsek

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This product, for use with the PLANESCAPE setting or any AD&D campaign, details the many creatures of the Upper Planes. DMs and players can discover the secrets of winged devas, mighty solars, stalwart guardinals, passionate eladrin, and others. It reveals how

Coming Attractions

Cover by Stephen Daniele

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By Eric L. Boyd

Retrieve the bones of a dracolich in the final module of the Mere of Dead Men series. An AD&D FORGOTTEN REALMS® adventure for levels 6–8.

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By Jason Duke

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these angelic hosts interact with mortals, fiends, and each other. Also look for the PLANESCAPE accessory *Faces of Evil: The Fiends* for details on the demonic hordes and how they relate to the AD&D planes of existence.

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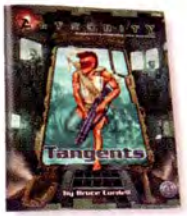
Tangents allows ALTERNITY game players to imagine all these worlds and more! Also includes full rules for dimensional travel, play tips, and adventure hooks to get the Gamemaster started, and information on how to incorporate dimensional travel into any campaign.



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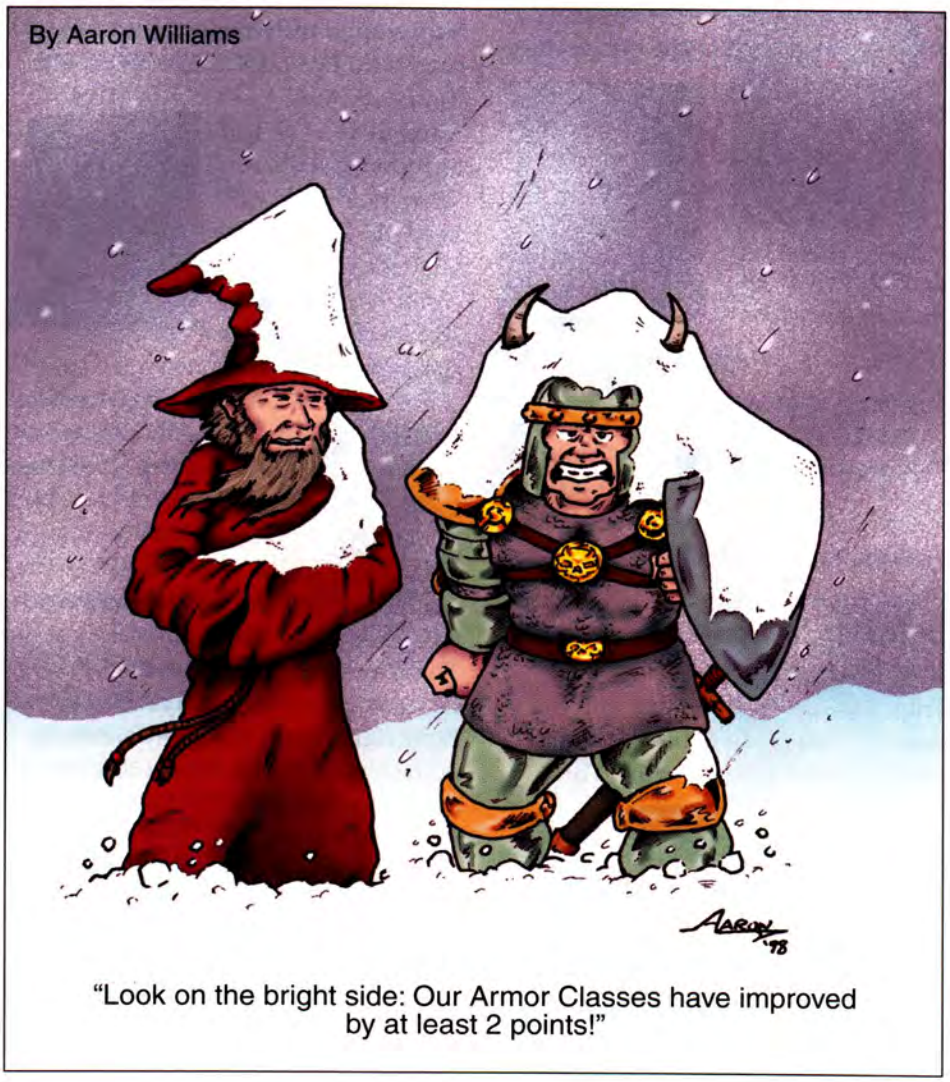

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Rogues Gallery

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For AD&D® rogues, there is no better haven than the overcrowded medieval city—a place where Bards entertain the masses and Thieves pilfer the unwary. In any city, rogues need places where they can hone their skills, unite with others in their profession, follow up on the latest rumors, and secure new job opportunities. These places are the Thieves' Guilds and Bards' Colleges, and no civilzed city is complete without them.

There are two ways to win this contest:

✠ **Design a Bards' College** Include a map of the college as well as a brief overview of the college's history and descriptions of its staff, students, and important patrons.

OR

✠ **Design a Thieves' Guild** Include a map of the guildhall as well as a brief overview of the guild's history, descriptions of the key guild members, and notes on current involvements.

Each entry should be limited to 3,000 words plus a map. Entries will be judged on originality, quality, richness of detail, and AD&D rules consistency. All entries must be received by March 26, 1999.

The first-place winner will receive a free one-year subscription to *DRAGON® Magazine* as well as $100 worth of current TSR roleplaying game product snatched from the offices of the TSR Games Department by the magazine's own intrepid Thieves' Guild. Two runners-up will each receive a free one-year subscription to *DRAGON Magazine*.

Dragon® MAGAZINE

"Rogues Gallery" Contest Rules

1. Entry: To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the contest to which your submission applies, and your proposed Rogues Gallery Description ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR") *DRAGON Magazine* Rogues Gallery Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many entries as you wish, but only one Entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Entries may not exceed 3,000 words in length. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), March 26, 1999. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the Entry's format, originality, and appropriateness. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the Entries received.

2. Originality of Entry: All Entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the Entry written above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the Entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the Entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. Use and Ownership of Entry Info: In consideration for TSR's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights in entry to TSR and acknowledges that the Entry is hereby the sole property of TSR. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in Entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to TSR. TSR shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. Prizes: The first-place winner of the Rogues Gallery Contest shall receive a free one-year subscription to *DRAGON Magazine* (value $34.95 U.S.) and $100 worth of current TSR roleplaying game products. Two runners-up shall each receive a free one-year subscription to *DRAGON Magazine*.

5. Eligibility: Void where prohibited by law. To receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit") within 5 days of receipt of notification or forfeit prize. If the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for, late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected Entries. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to *DRAGON Magazine* Rogues Gallery Design Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton WA 98057. Requests for winners lists must be received by April 3, 1999. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

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"Rogues Gallery" **Contest**

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Profiles

Photograph by Corey Macourek

rk post

He may sign his name in lowercase, but **illustrator rk post** has had a big impact on the ALTERNITY® game and the STAR*DRIVE™ campaign.

by Stephen Kenson

Born in the Quad Cities area of Illinois, Randy Post never set out to be a fantasy illustrator. "I originally went to school to become a veterinarian," he says. "I eventually decided it wasn't my bag and went into advertising design at Northern Illinois University. But I realized I didn't have the patience or love for it after my junior year, so I went into illustration (which I loved more) with every intention of working in advertising."

From there, Post went on to freelance for several game companies, including TSR. Some of his early work includes *Red Steel*, *Cutthroats of Lankhmar*, and *Spells & Magic*. When he began working for TSR full-time in September of 1996, he jumped into two projects right away: the PLANESCAPE® setting for the AD&D® game and the new ALTERNITY Science-Fiction Roleplaying Game. "My first published painting after coming to TSR was *The Great Modron March* for the PLANESCAPE setting. I always loved PLANESCAPE and was glad to get to work on it. The look embodied everything that I liked and wanted to try."

When asked how much he influenced the overall look of the ALTERNITY game, Post says, "a little and a lot, actually. ALTERNITY started a year or two before I came to TSR. When I got there, most of the game itself was designed, along with the various aliens. I took them and helped define them visually. I had fun doing the sesheyans. They're probably the most alien of them all. When it comes to ships, I didn't have much to do with it, but otherwise, I was right in there."

In fact, ALTERNITY was actually some of Post's first work for TSR, even though the game wasn't published until recently. "The first painting I did at TSR was the cover for the STAR*DRIVE™ book. Because the book didn't come out right away, I got to re-do the painting a few times, so my first painting was also my fourth or fifth painting by the time it was done."

What's different about working on the ALTERNITY line rather than more traditional fantasy illustration? "I don't know anybody who wouldn't want to do Sci-Fi," Post says. "It's just different from the usual sort of thing. I like to create things that are twisted and kind of spooky, and ALTERNITY has lots of stuff like that. I don't do daisies and cute little faeries, and I hate painting dwarves. They're so ill proportioned, they just never come out looking right. I could probably do some really cool dwarves, but I'd have to work at it."

Along with his ALTERNITY work, Post illustrates the occasional card for *Magic: the Gathering*® and even paints covers for *DRAGON® Magazine*. "I'm having a lot of fun with the cover I'm working on now. In the painting I used the other art guys like Brom as models. Brom is even done in sort of the 'Brom style,' with the weird yellow eyes and the white, pale skin. We [artists] have a lot of fun playing off each other."

Fans can check out his web page at http://members.tripod.com/~rkpost/ for news and a gallery of his work, along with various pieces available for purchase. According to Post, there are plans to expand the website in the near future and to include links to the web pages of other fantasy artists and illustrators. He can also be reached by email at rpost@wizards.com.

When it comes to talking about his hobbies, Post says, "I don't really have any." He rarely, if ever, has the chance to play any of the games he illustrates for. "I don't have the time or a group to play with." Painting is his first love. "I'm the kind of guy who goes to work and paints all day, then I come home and paint some more. While I'm on vacation I stay at home and paint." In addition to his art, Post spends time playing with his three sons, ages 9, 5, and 3. "Three boys, all like me," Post says with a laugh. "We team up to get our way all the time, so Mom has to watch out."

Although they're too young to get into roleplaying or card games, one of rk's sons is a budding artist. "He's five years old, and he's painting. He watches Bob Ross on PBS and follows along, which is pretty amazing. Of course, it's handy that he has a dad who has all the art supplies at home. I let him use my paints and brushes and stuff. All the boys like to paint, but he's got more drive about it." Still, Post doesn't have any preconceived notions about his sons becoming artists. "They do what they want," he says, "and that includes art."

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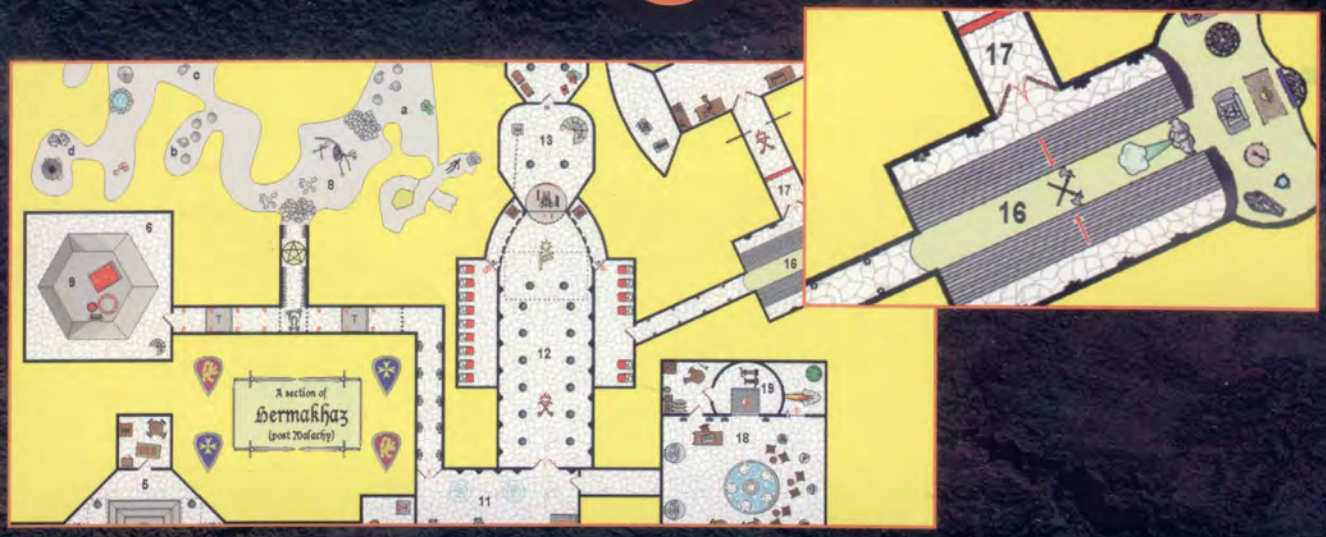
Windows® 95/98 & Windows® NT 4

New from Profantasy Software Ltd

Dungeon Designer 2



Dungeon Designer 2 is the eagerly awaited first add-on product for Campaign Cartographer 2 and the Core Rules 2.0 Campaign Mapper.

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DD2 has over 400 stunning symbols to make dungeon maps and floor plans beautiful. There are symbols for devious traps, doors, windows, strange statues, temple features and many others. You can create simple, distinctive generic maps or create professional quality full colour artwork for RPG publications.

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Dungeon Designer 2 is US$36.95 in the US and Canada, £24.95 in the rest of the world.
Upgrade for DOS users of Dungeon Designer US$27.95 in the US and Canada, £18.95 elsewhere.

TO ORDER
If your retailer does not stock Dungeon Designer 2
Internet go to ProFantasy's website at http://www.profantasy.com
In the US and Canada phone 1-800-841-1487 (Shipping $7.00, Rush Shipping $12.50)
Elsewhere phone UK 0171 738 8877 or fax UK 0171 738 8282 (£5.00 P&P UK, £10.00 elsewhere)

Questions?
e-mail dd2@profantasy.com or call our pre-sales enquiry line on 1-800-281-2411 8AM-8PM Hawaii Standard Time

Requirements
DD2 requires Campaign Cartographer 2 or AD&D® Core Rules 2.0 Campaign Mapper.
System requirements are any PC that runs Windows® 95/NT4/98 and an 800x600 display

The design revolution goes underground!

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